



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

ART IN
SHORT STORY
NARRATION

HENRY
ALBERT
PHILLIPS

st 966.16

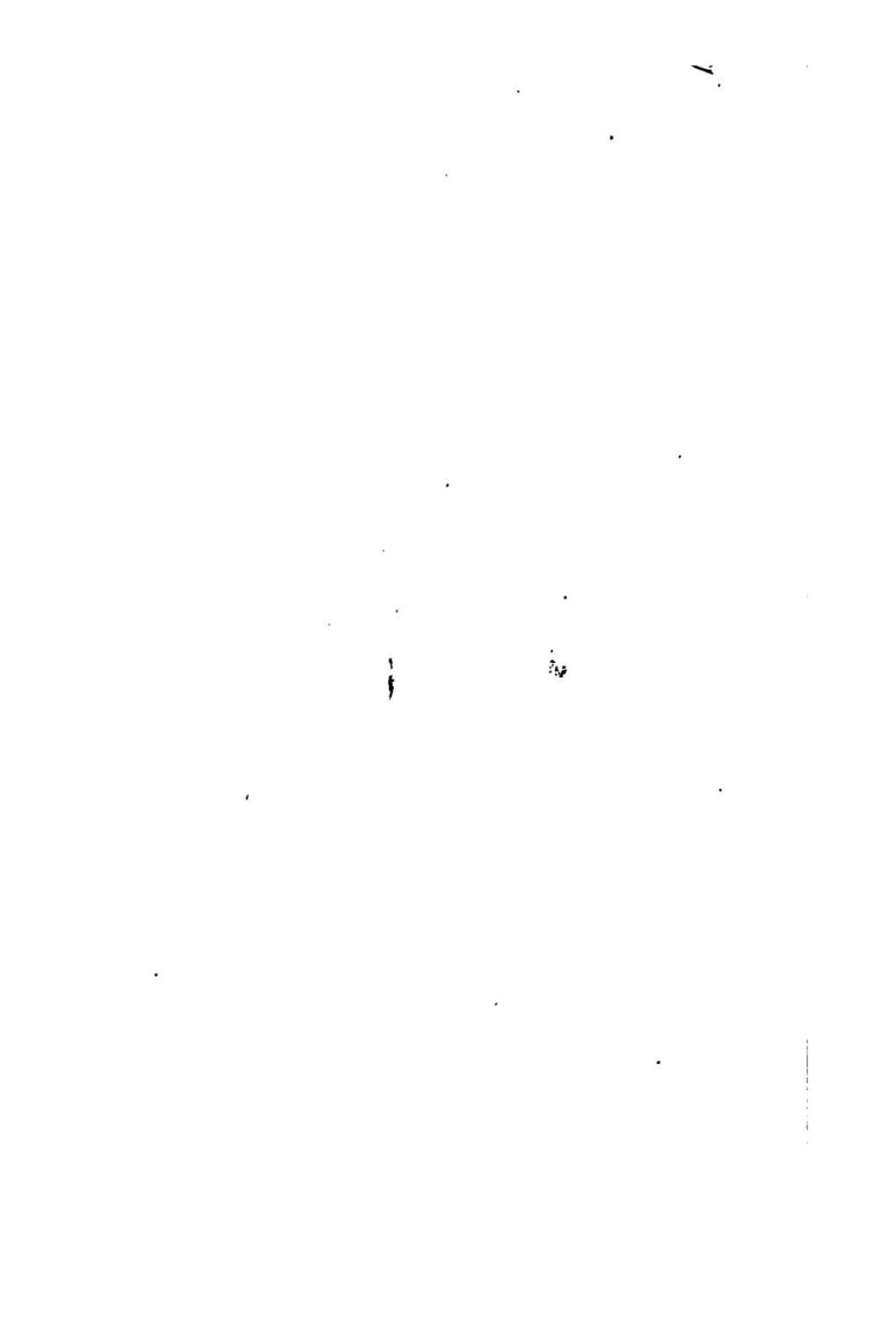
Harvard College
Library

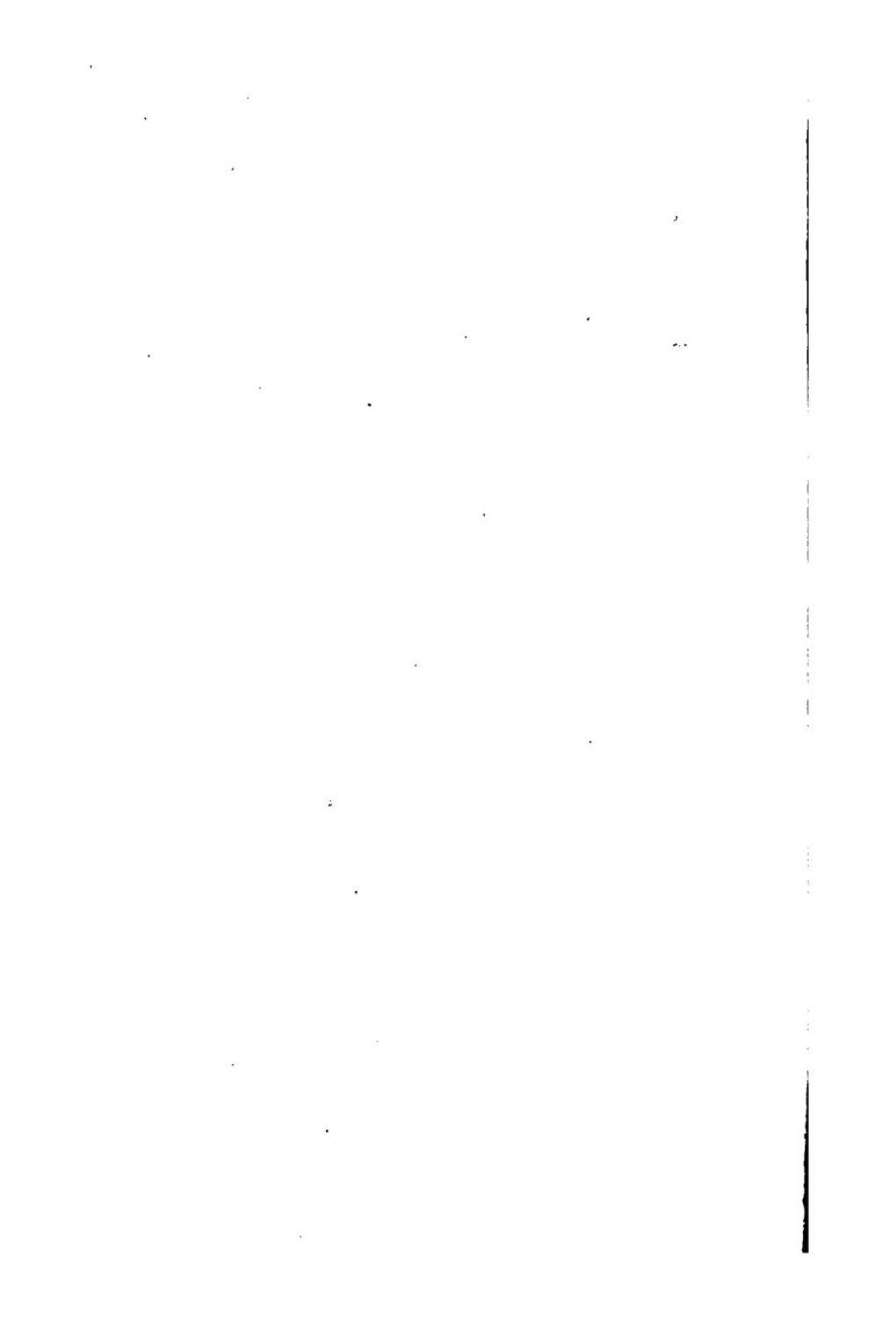


FROM THE BEQUEST OF

Mary Osgood

OF MEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS





THE AUTHORS' HAND-BOOK SERIES

**Art In Short Story
Narration**

**A Searching Analysis of the Qualifications of Fiction
in General, and of the Short Story in Particular,
with Copious Examples, Making the Work**

A PRACTICAL TREATISE

BY

HENRY ALBERT PHILLIPS

**Author of "The Plot of the Short Story," and formerly Associate
Editor of the Metropolitan Magazine**

INTRODUCTION BY

REX BEACH

**Author of "The Barrier," "The Silver Horde," "The
Ne'er Do Well," etc.**

**THE STANHOPE-DODGE PUBLISHING CO.
LARCHMONT, NEW YORK**

Lit 966.16



*Substituted for a copy lost.
(Mary Osgood found)*

Copyright, 1913, by
HENRY ALBERT PHILLIPS



J. F. TAPLEY CO.
NEW YORK

**TO
MY SON
ROBERT HENRY SHEPARD PHILLIPS
A SOURCE OF CONSTANT INSPIRATION
I DEDICATE
THIS VOLUME**

OTHER VOLUMES IN
THE AUTHORS' HAND-BOOK SERIES

THE MECHANICS OF FICTION

(Now in Preparation)

by

HENRY ALBERT PHILLIPS

Author of "A Complete Course in Short Story Writing," "The Plot of the Short Story," "Art in Short Story Narration," and formerly Associate Editor *Metropolitan Magazine*.

Introduction by a Famous Literary Critic.

PRICE, POSTPAID, \$1.20

THE STANHOPE-DODGE PUBLISHING COMPANY
Book Department, Larchmont, N. Y.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE PLOT OF THE SHORT STORY

An exhaustive study, both synthetical and analytical, with copious examples, making the work

A PRACTICAL TREATISE

INTRODUCTION BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.
(Formerly *Editor of the Argosy*)

- "This hand-book may be regarded as the best thing of its kind extant."—*North Carolina Education*.
"It is right that the analysis you have made should be made."—*Sir Gilbert Parker*.
"One of the commendable books of recent times in short-story writing."—*Hartford Post*.
"I read your book with the greatest interest."—*Richard Harding Davis*.
"An excellent book for the student, whether critic or author."—*Book News Monthly*.
"It is the best hand-book on the subject I have seen."—*James Oppenheim*.
"The book is a master in its field."—*Salt Lake Tribune*.
"It is an excellent thing excellently done."—*Jack London*.
—NEARLY A THOUSAND OTHERS.

PRICE, POSTPAID, \$1.20

THE STANHOPE-DODGE PUBLISHING COMPANY
Book Department, Larchmont, N. Y.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	vii
FOREWORD	x1
I ART AND TECHNIQUE	15
Symbols; Six Mediums; Sphere of the Creator; Significance of Re- pression.	
II LITERATURE AND LIFE	24
The Fiction Deluge; Producer vs. Consumer; to Amuse or to Enter- tain.	
III THE ARTISTRY OF NARRATION	30
Enter Art; What is Demanded; Essentials; Movement and Action; Vividness.	
IV THE SHORT STORY	36
Coöperation; Isolation; Selection.	
V FACT VERSUS FICTION	41
Taste vs. Truth; Romance and Realism; the True Story; the Im- probable and the Impossible.	
VI IMPRESSION AND EXPRESSION	48
Personal Equation; Reality; Visu- alizing; the Writer's Ultimate Aim.	
VII THE POTENCY OF SUGGESTION	53
Re-Creation; Color Values; Asso- ciation and Relationships; Figurative Language.	
VIII BEAUTY AND EMBELLISHMENT	59
Esthetics; Figures; Taste; Revea- lment; Imagery; the Artist's Vision.	
IX THE APPEAL THAT CREATES INTEREST	66
Entertainment; Sympathy and Tol- erance; Plausibility; Four Stages in Development of Interest.	

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
X THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EMOTION Mood; Feeling; Passion; Eloquence; Pathos.	72
XI THE SCOPE OF IMAGINATION Glamor; Fantasy; the Artist's Right to Fame.	78
XII THE POWER OF MOTIVE Theme; Morals; Unique Power of the Artist; Sermons; the Unconscious Motive.	85
XIII THE INFLUENCE OF ATMOSPHERE Color of Medium; Metaphor; Atmosphere as an Abstract Quality; Two Aspects.	93
XIV THE CHARM OF HARMONY Unity; Organism vs. Organization; Color; Harmony of Plot and Theme; Tone Effects.	102
XV THE HUMAN ELEMENT Life; Characters; Human Interest; Heart Interest and Story Interest; Naturalness.	111
XVI THE DRAMATIC SPARK Contrasts; Tragedy; Melodrama; Suspense; Drama and Literature.	118
XVII THE TEMPER OF LOVE Details ad Nauseam; Romance and Love; Illicit Love; the Incomparable Theme.	124
XVIII THE POIGNANCY OF EFFECT Climax; Vividness; Plausibility; Art for Art's Sake; to Win Fame; When All is Said and Done.	130
XIX A STUDY IN ANALYSIS A Short Story, "Sacrifice," Dissected With a View to Art in its Narration.	136

INTRODUCTION

MANY books have been written bearing chiefly upon the technical side of fiction construction, but few — indeed, if any — have taken a step further and undertaken to analyze and reconstruct the artistic qualifications essential to fiction literature. Sometimes it is easier to tell how to do a thing, than it is to do it or to define intelligently the nature of the thing to be done. The literary craft has been informed so often how it should do its work, that it seems refreshing to be told in definite terms just what that work is.

"Art in Short Story Narration," then, is a book of unusual timeliness. Never before have so many short stories been written — and published; never before has there been such a vast army of tyros — and such a great company of successful authors. In like proportion the field for technical lore and critical discussion has advanced and widened apace.

INTRODUCTION

For all writers find, sooner or later, that the more thorough their training and the more profound their learning concerning their craft the greater is likely to be their artistic success.

However true it may be that writers are born rather than made, it certainly is a fact that literary workmen win success from their efforts in proportion to the amount of work and study they put into them. Above all things, the beginner should hesitate to essay even the simplest kind of a short story before he acquires a definite knowledge of what the short story is and how it should be constructed. There would be fewer failures if such a reasonable and normal policy were generally pursued. There is little question—from what we can learn of the average novice and his lack of painstaking effort—but that the hundreds of daily rejections of manuscripts are not well-deserved. There is always keen competition among producers of slip-shoddy wares of all kinds, they tell us—and there is no reason why the fiction producer should be made an exception. On the other hand, never was there such a crying demand for meritorious fiction.

INTRODUCTION

"Art in Short Story Narration," tho an excellent hand-book for beginners, will be found to contain an inexhaustible fund of searching information and definitive advice for the advanced and successful writer of fiction. By delving into the philosophy of fiction, the author has uncovered a wealth of material that is worthy of the serious and frequent contemplation of all students and practitioners of the literary art. By students of fiction literature, one might be tempted to include serious-minded readers in search of new beauties and a new plane of appreciation.

One excellent point, at least, that "Art in Short Story Narration" has made unmistakably clear, is that the production of fiction has but few points in common with the merely mechanical trades or the purely technical professions. Due stress is laid upon the inherent qualities of Art; and the acquired qualifications of the artist. A great service may thus be accomplished toward elevating the craft of authorship. The beginner will realize, after reading this little book, whether or not he is mentally, emotionally and spiritually endowed by nature, and equipped by education

INTRODUCTION

and fortitude, to depict the fiction-vision and undertake the laborious task necessary to perfect effort! No one should be hindered from trying to write, if he honestly feels that he must and *can*. But the moment any man realizes that he cannot write, he should stop — at least for a year or so. Maturity and reflection may bring deeper inspiration. Hopeless efforts in literary production result in a deluge of meaningless manuscript that is unworthy of publication, an insult to editorial intelligence and an eternal injury to the producer of it.

Rex Beach.

The processes of acquiring a practical knowledge of any subject are always the same: Study, analysis, synthesis, comparison.

FOREWORD

THE little volume—"The Plot of the Short Story,"—preceding the present work, has met with such a favorable reception that it has encouraged me to endeavor to present still other phases of Short Story construction and analysis. There is still another reason, however, that has been even more compelling. This has been the assumption on the part of some of the book reviewers, that I have been taking undue liberties with a certain Divine Right. Writing of Fiction, they contend, is governed by Unwritten Laws, Technique in this profession, I am warned, is God-given.

After most searching analysis and unremitting study I still find the technique of the Short Story art, not only the most difficult, but also the most learnable and the most necessary to artistic perfection.

FOREWORD

As I stated in the former book, "Plotting the Short Story is largely a process of science; narrating it is altogether a matter of Art." Hence I have jumped the full swing of the pendulum; from a definite science to an elusive art.

The chapters that follow represent an earnest effort to analyze and define the abstract virtues of Short Story fiction in concrete terms that will make them both familiar and recognizable to students of fiction. Once the great difficulties of this or any art become apparent to its aspirants, the more willing will they be to make the effort required to master them.

All science is founded on a working knowledge of its material elements; all Art is based on an emotional appreciation of its esthetic standards.

When we take into serious consideration that all fiction is fictive, make-believe Art, a manufactured or artificial picture of life, something that never happened in particular, yet happens every day in general — why, it must stand to reason that the mechanics of such an art can be taught.

FOREWORD

It is doubtful indeed that full-blown power to create creditable fiction ever comes to anyone. It would be a difficult matter to decide since practicably every civilized person is blest with an opportunity to read the matured writings of some other author. The pioneers used what gifts they had, to be sure, but had to pass slowly thru a state of crudity to one bordering on perfection. We of an enlightened age listen to, read, and study the words of acknowledged masters, commenting upon their remarkable effects *and marveling at their causes.* These causes are technical ability linked with genius. Assuredly there can be teachers and guides in any calling that has a definite technique.

True Art then depends fully as much upon knowledge and practice as it does upon special gifts and imagination.

Art is the acme of order, and the secret of all order is arrangement. That arrangement which is not amenable to practical hints and subject to law and order is allied with chaos.

To understand Art, we are told that one must study it. But if there is no technique,

FOREWORD

no standards, no elementary dissection, how are we to study it?

The logical steps in all study seem to be first analysis, next synthesis, and finally comparison.

I am afraid I have not followed the logical order, for in "The Plot of the Short Story" I have essayed synthesis in the main, in the present volume, analysis.

The foremost consideration, after all, thruout the entire Authors' Handbook Series shall be to make these books contain enough inspirational material to aid every class of writer and in the end to stimulate a wider popular appreciation of the Short Story Art.

HENRY ALBERT PHILLIPS.

May 20, 1913.

All science is founded on a working knowledge of its material elements; all Art is based on an emotional appreciation of its esthetic standards.

CHAPTER I

ART AND TECHNIQUE

SYMBOLS; SIX MEDIUMS; SPHERE OF THE CREATOR; SIGNIFICANCE OF REPRESSION.

ART consists in an endeavor to express thru an outward and visible symbol some great inward and invisible truth or spiritual struggle. Art therefore is fundamentally pictorial and dramatic. The message of Art is conveyed thru two of the five senses—sight and hearing. Its appeal is not sensual, but esthetic. Primarily, its aim is to pierce the emotions and rouse the imagination and, secondarily, to elicit admiration.

The six grand mediums of Art are: Sculpture, Painting, Music, Poetry, Drama and Literature. A certain inherent similitude pre-

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

vails thru them all. The devotee, student, and expert become, sooner or later, aware of a definite plan, a conscious technique, a sense of proportion, a standard of excellence and a tendency toward perfection. Atmosphere, arrangement, motif, climax and effect are subtilely made to play their parts in all.

A work of Art should be judged, not by the size of the production, the pains, labor and time expended in producing it, or because of any innovations, but for its intrinsic appeal and its technical perfection. Its internal, unseen power may be accorded the first place in our consideration; its external, technical beauty will fall into the second. And, what is important, lies in the fact that an artistic production may be technically beautiful, and yet inspire any one or more of the "clean" emotions, as, for instance: horror, pity, pathos, kindliness, joy, exultation, etc., but never disgust. Disgust is the spontaneous form of just condemnation.

(EXAMPLE 1.) Horror is well illustrated in Sculpture by "*The Laocoön*"; pity in drama by "*King Lear*"; pathos in Poetry by "*We Are Seven*"; kindliness in (Hunt's) Painting, "*The Light of the World*"; joy in Literature by "*The*

ART AND TECHNIQUE

Brushwood Boy"; and exultation in Music by Handel's "Largo."

It is often stated that the function of the artist is to create, in its most literal sense; to make something out of nothing. But is this prerogative vouchsafed to any save God alone, and not even to His earthly manifestation, Nature? Does not our artist rather re-create, his refined susceptibility ensnaring and etching, as it were, some eternal legend of transcendent human experience? Thus even horror is made sublime by laying bare for an instant man's soul as it totters between human futility and divine potentiality.

Again, we speak of that which is produced by Art, rather than by Nature, as being artificial. In Nature we see man realized in his manifold capacities; in Art we meet man idealized in a moment of singular intensity. We have said, too, that Art is but the symbol of some internal truth or struggle. Now if Art is but the symbol of the invisible, how could its devotees know its virtues unless they recognized it as something they already possessed within themselves?

Oh, sublime function of Art, with powers

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

to mirror for all posterity in marble and in melody, in language and in color, those grand emotions which thrill men once, then flit away to join the ghostly army that haunts the heart of every man!

The artist is the millionth man, endowed with the rare power of portraying the passions common to the other pulsing thousands who all have within them the full range of human sublimities. It is not a matter of capacity with them, but of civilization, environment, education, culture, and a host of other "reasons" not difficult to conceive.

Art demands, first of all, appreciation. The observer, the reader, the listener, must be impelled to exclaim: "This is Nature! This is life! This is I!"

The uncultured refuses to take the original premise in all artistic appreciation that Art is but a symbol. The illusion will come, never fear, if the soul is thrown wide to the impression. But the uncultured one sees only with his eyes, he can perceive only the physical facts and is deprived of the spiritual truths. In the greatest story he sees but the printed page; in the soul-caught painting he

ART AND TECHNIQUE

sees but a daubed canvas; in the sublime poetry he sees words forced out of their natural orbits; the throbbing drama is but a passing to and fro of actors mouthing a pretense; the symphony is but a group of fiddlers making a din.

Individuals are prone to favoritism in the choice and judgment of which form of artistic expression is to them either the most esthetic or most realistic. Some contend that one gives more pleasure, while the other lends greater conviction. In this connection it may be well to examine the handicaps that the six mediums chosen have to overcome. Music, Poetry and Literature have a yoke laid upon them that the true artist must lift at the outset or fail to attain Art. Before the auditor or the reader can be made to feel he must be made to see—the picture must be *visualized*. Provided the vision itself is transcendent, then the message is complete the moment it is visualized. The soul-vision must construct the tangible picture.

On the other hand, Painting, Sculpture and Drama, being visible first and always, operate in a reverse direction. The tangible picture

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

must lead instantly to the soul-vision, yet *must not lay upon it a limit*. By this is meant that great Art is capable of personal interpretation, according to capacity and regardless of experience.

(EXAMPLE 2.) As—*The Sybarite comprehends at once the message of Millet's "The Sower"; the Infidel sees thru to the heart of Angelo's "Moses"; the childless man is in anguish for Shakespeare's "Lear."*

The moment that Art becomes static, or the wings of the imagination are clipped, that moment it loses its emotional appeal and ceases to be Art, and takes its place possibly even rightfully among things merely artistic.

Artistic appreciation is simply emotional response. We see ourselves; we feel the truth; we are sure that not exactly a new emotion is called to bear witness, but one that hovered within, thirsting for revealment; we are made to enjoy a keener relationship with all men, and to realize a closer proximity to the infinite.

Art that does not admit of some individual and personal interpretation is narrow and circumscribed. Furthermore Art must be ex-

ART AND TECHNIQUE

pressed according to technical standards approaching perfection and by means of readily recognized symbols of human emotion. It should never be necessary that the viewpoint of appreciation should be strained in order to catch effects.

(EXAMPLE 3.) This rule seems grossly violated in Painting and in Sculpture by the work of the Cubists and the Futurists. The artist must become lecturer, first explaining what manner of creature he has portrayed, secondly giving his reasons defensively.

In other words, we have one man's view obsessed by a mass of technicality. He dictates that — to him — color analyzed is so-and-so; form individualized is so-and-so. The result is a technical vision mentally warped to the point of distraction. He neither expresses nor stirs the elevated emotions. All the other branches of Art have suffered off and on from the same sort of neurotic invasion as Futurism.

On the other hand, the viewpoint of the artist has much to do with making him greater than his fellows. It depends not so much on the purity of his vision as on the unity of his

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

impression and the singleness of expression that he gives it. Here he is called upon to exercise the greatest virtue of his craft — *restraint*.

In restraint, or repression, lies the secret of any and all success in Art. And after all it means being unselfish, giving one's entire self up to the vision and not detracting from its due by adding one's likes, dislikes or opinions. Again, let us repeat, Art's expression and appeal are universal, not individualistic.

Having once perceived his single grand unit or central idea and figure in his composition that shall reveal to others his vision of truth, the artist must make every subsequent touch subservient to it. This prime motif or idea, with its attendant emotion, dominates the color or key; the grouping or volume; the pitch or climax. Local color must take its hue from the central figure or dominating color of the composition. In the management of chiaroscuro lies the judgment of a work of Art. Every high light and shadow must accentuate the appeal of the central idea or motif, or it has no *raison d'être*. The appeal may be most simple in its entirety,

ART AND TECHNIQUE

yet be accomplished thru a teeming mass of suggestive elements, so unified as to conceal their multiplicity. And such artistic execution as this demands both a knowledge and an exercise of technique.

People say of true Art, "*I feel* that I could have done this myself!" And there we have that eternal, deathless energy that the artist sets in motion, which once created is endless and is capable henceforth of exerting in all those who can comprehend it, some quota of its initial power. But the artist must make it appear easy of accomplishment by concealing, through his craftsmanship, the difficult technique behind the glowing, motivating message. The machinery and engines of efficiency are lost to view in the work's glorious perfection and inspiration.

Every artist must master technique; or he is but an artisan whom technique masters.

Let us return to our original premise and keep it before us as our guiding principle thruout our discussion: Art consists in an endeavor to express, thru an outward and visible symbol, some great inward and invisible truth or spiritual struggle.

*It is the fearless vision furnished by
the farseeing Poet that suggests and
illuminates uncharted paths for the
groping Scientist.*

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE AND LIFE

THE FICTION DELUGE; PRODUCER VS. CON-
SUMER; TO AMUSE OR TO ENTERTAIN.

LITERATURE represents Art's contribu-
tion thru letters and language. It
portrays the grand moments in grand lives —
or in Nature — in a grand way.

Only a small portion of the History, Biog-
raphy, Essays, Poetry and Fiction written is
acceptable as Literature. For, since these
modes of literary expression do not come un-
der the head of exact science, their eligibility
must be based on individual effort and esthetic
standards. We come once again to the por-
tals of Art and meet its requirements for
entry: intrinsic worth and merit of idea,
coupled with external grace and beauty.

LITERATURE AND LIFE

Never in history has such a mass of reading matter been turned out by the presses as in our present day and generation. Yet it is a matter for regret to pause and be forced to confess that never has there been less Literature since the printing press began to disseminate it. For the only boast we can substantiate lies in the magnitude of our "production and consumption."

The cry of the producer is that the consumer is at fault, that he demands a certain "popular" kind of reading matter, which, alas, he obtains. All the consumer actually demands, however, is literary provender, and what he really needs is to have his tastes cultivated. Our literary producers have become a host, and are for the most part mere dabblers in their espoused calling. They have not that elevated consideration and appreciation for Literature and sublime patience in exploitation that are the requisites for artistic production. Too many have just "happened" to fall upon a commercial enterprise.

On the other hand, if the producer of Literature would but set himself to the task of perfecting himself as an artist and then strive

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

honestly to produce work worthy of the name, he would soon cultivate appreciation and find a widening audience. Readers are after all the masses, writers the classes; it is mind versus matter.

But the producer of Literature must be a profound student, not only of his medium of expression, but of contemporary conditions, the lives people lead, their morals, their beliefs and their leisure. Only then can he hope to arrive at the true basis of what constitutes their legitimate entertainment. For true Art must never lose its first, foremost and esthetic function of entertaining.

That which entertains the fiction lovers of one generation may be considered, in common parlance, cultured posing by another; what is a normal belief in one, is looked upon as sacrilege by another; what is viewed as an innocent diversion by one, is shunned as an immoral perversion by another. The movement of the daily life of a people will regulate, also, the duration and character of their pastimes. There was a time when the three-volumed novel served the leisurely purpose of the average reader; we have lived to see the

LITERATURE AND LIFE

day when the Short Story best suits the mood and the leisure of the fiction-reading public.

The cultured reader, like the connoisseur of Art in any of its manifestations, can enjoy to the full the Literature of any clime and day, because he has an adaptable mentality and is considerate and tolerant of contemporary conditions. The cultivated writer must know the heart of his people and be in sympathy with his times. Furthermore, the writer must be on the side of the good citizen and in all things show himself a cultured gentleman. He must observe the laws of his time, as much as he does the laws of rhetoric, neither allowing his work to condone evil nor permitting it to sneer at good. While this is but a rational exercise of good judgment, we might at the same time call it the practice of good taste.

Literature in its true sense being a form of Art, should in a larger or smaller degree possess enduring qualities. Thus fiction might be classified as light and heavy; the former presenting an ebullition of the emotions in a moment of frolicsome mood worthy of emulation; the latter conveying a serious message

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

capable of mental and moral stimulation. Masterpieces come under the latter heading.

True literary fiction, which is the only kind that will endure, is not called forth by commercial recompense, but rather it cries out for expression. The *raison d'être* of fiction lies in the assurance that therein is to be a contribution to Literature or, as we hear it expressed more commonly, there must be a story to tell. Otherwise it never can be Literature and has but a commercial excuse for its existence.

A mistaken idea exists among not a few editors, many writers and most of the public, that the prime function of fiction is to amuse. They have confused the two words, amuse and entertain. The former is of a much lower order of diversion than the latter. One may be greatly amused by being tickled with a straw. To be perfectly entertained one must enter into the spirit of the entertainment, lend one's whole mind and emotions and become the intelligent guest of the hour. To be entertained then does not mean passively to accept the broad thrusts of a paid performer, but to participate with the best emotions that one possesses in an elevating experience or

LITERATURE AND LIFE

spectacle. Fiction must first be interesting, or have a personal appeal to the reader before he will permit it to become entertaining. The writer's chief concern should be always to strike a chord of universal interest, which as we have learned is but the normal function of the true artist.

In fiction, technique is by no means everything, neither is plot; foremost, there must be a vision, or a story, and then, an artist to portray it. He must have the power to make others see what he feels; to make others feel what he sees, all in terms of common understanding. Thus literary power is that which re-creates life in the dormant emotions of the reader. It is of a piece with life's mysterious process, for we cannot tell fundamentally how life is created. But we can show how it can be made more beautiful, more wholesome and more enduring than nature herself has endowed it.

In the silent sweep of the writer's pen the roar of the multitude is heard.

CHAPTER III

THE ARTISTRY OF NARRATION

ENTER ART; WHAT IS DEMANDED; ESSENTIALS;
MOVEMENT AND ACTION; VIVIDNESS.

THE process of fiction narration is altogether one of applied Art.

The writer becomes the interpreter of dreams, the soothsayer of past, present and future, the painter of souls, the magician of language, the entertainer of the multitude, the musician of the emotions, the maker of melodies — all in one, the artist.

The story becomes a lure, and all who can give the countersign of faith are admitted to an inner circle of life apart from, yet a part of, their own. In narration the writer exhumes buried treasures, he treads holy ground; yet he becomes but a custodian of the relics of emotional genius, passing them along with

THE ARTISTRY OF NARRATION

all the reverence and respect due divine gifts and privileges.

In narration the reader is made, presumably to cease to read and come suddenly to live the experience depicted. Our story must make the heart beat faster; it must pierce the source of tears and echo thru the portals of mirth; it must grasp the sympathies with a clasp so human (and artful) that the reader is lured away by something of the charm of spontaneous impulse and the conviction of personal experience. The opening paragraph becomes the lure of a vivid dream-in-print and the reader submits himself yieldingly to the artist's deft touch. The threshold once crossed, facts that merely exist fade away, and deeds that live flow irresistibly into the consciousness. In a short while the reader is made to re-live the vital moment in the life of another human soul that surpasses daily commonplaces and henceforth is numbered among his great, personal moments of intimate experience; life, death, peril, grief, joy pass so close that their breath stirs his hair and their very nearness sets every chord of emotion vibrating. No land is too distant, no period of time too re-

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

mote, no star unexplorable, no emotion too profound for our fiction artist.

(EXAMPLE 4.) Kipling has brought the depths of the Jungle within the circle of our reading lamp; in "The Pit and the Pendulum" we are made to feel the horrors of the Inquisition; in "The War of the Worlds" we hold our breaths at the super-terrestrial; in "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" rare emotions find easy expression.

In narration the writer magically touches the heart thru the imagination. His story in no sense tries to reproduce the illusion of the speaking voice, but the emotions of the appealing heart. To narrate is not meant merely to tell a story, but to produce the illusive phenomena of actually living the deeds that make up the story. Every written word must possess some quality of contributive eloquence and suggestive emotion. All of which gives some idea of the difficultness of the writer's task.

Narration might be justly called the process of deluding the willing reader.

The writer's touch and manner of expression may be dim, vague and mysterious; but the impression in the reader's mind and the

THE ARTISTRY OF NARRATION

motif line of the story must never be anything but clear, firm and apparent.

(EXAMPLE 5.) This delicate, evanescent quality of expression is a tour de force with Eleanor Hallowell Abbott. "The Sick-a-bed Lady" and "Molly Make-Believe" are a source of never-ending delight because of the vague, intangible style of narration that is thrown like a gray gossamer over the gleaming truths within.

Art in narration consists in an appeal to the emotions thru esthetic mediums of language. The truth must never be in doubt; the medium of expressing it highly suggestive. To make an esthetic appeal, the writer must be endowed with the emotional sight. It is this faculty of seeing and portraying the internal truth that leads us to call a narrator, creator, as well. He tells his story in terms of the heart. These are the vibrant threads that weave any tale into the woof and warp of humanity and make it a tapestry of literature.

The demand for "action" stories on the part of some of our less literary magazines, has put the necessity of dynamic visuality and tangibility above that of appealing emotion and sympathy. Setting and character delinea-

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

tion, in part, must of course be made both visual and tangible, but that once accomplished thru the reader's imagination, the supreme appeal for approval, appreciation and participation is made thru the reader's emotions. He who tries to delude the mind of the reader seldom succeeds; but he who touches the heart never fails to carry illusion. So much for the distinction between delusion and illusion; one is deceit, the other revelation.

How few that look have eyes to see, but, how many that read have hearts to feel! Therein lies the writer's sphere, his opportunity.

It is the privilege of the gifted narrator to hark back to the tender and poignant phases of all human hearts.

A fiction narrative is something infinitely more than mere composition. In a composition one strives to attain perfection of a certain literary form. In fiction narrative one must translate *man-alive* in terms of understanding, sympathy and conviction.

The two tasks set in fiction are to make either a transcendental vision out of a commonplace event, or to make a commonplace

THE ARTISTRY OF NARRATION

experience out of a transcendental vision; to glorify the ordinary, and to universalize the extraordinary.

It shall be the undertaking in the chapters of this volume to tell what those elements are that make the commonplace wonderful; that make the plain romantic. In a word, just what the glamor of fiction is. How they are obtained is a matter of synthesis and has been reserved for specific discussion in another volume.

The Short Story is not correctly a condensed form, but a condensed idea.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHORT STORY

COOPERATION ; ISOLATION ; SELECTION.

A DEFINITION of the Short Story does not here seem out of place.

The Modern Short Story is a fiction narrative, not merely because it is termed "short," or because it happens to be told in few words, but by reason of its single, essential, isolated idea treated with compressive technique and selective art. It should set out to tell, not the history of an entire life-career, but the story of the supreme moment in a given life or career. Every word, every phrase, every incident, should bear direct relationship to the climax. Economy, unity and compression should govern every element. The story should take place—as nearly as possible—in *one* viewpoint; within *one* period of time; there should

THE SHORT STORY

be *one* character to whom all others are subordinated; the *one* progressive action should be confined, if possible, to *one* place; above all, there should be *one* grand climax, or situation, toward which every element moves with rapid, clean strokes; and, finally, there should be but *one* vivid impression left in the mind of the reader at the conclusion of the story.

Like powder capable of tremendous compression, the force of its explosion will be in proportion to those powers of compression. How great will be the effect of the climax of a given story may be measured by the appeal of the story's motif-idea, plus the writer's art in narration.

(EXAMPLE 6.) *The reader of "The Tell-Tale Heart," is so affected by the sheer narrative of feeling that he is constrained to believe the man is not insane, even after an indisputable appeal to his reason is made. How grand and feasible seemed the ambitions of the traveler in "The Ambitious Guest," until we have passed "the slide" with its terrible power to wipe man and his ambitions off the face of the earth!*

Writing the Short Story may be compared with intensive farming. The smallest space is utilized with such intelligent forethought

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

that it is made to yield an even more luxuriant growth than a space many times larger cultivated in a less intensive way. The greatness of an idea is not reckoned by the space it occupies, but by the emotion it has the energy to move. This depends entirely upon its expression as employed in narration.

All fiction is a matter, more or less, of selection. The Short Story, however, is ultra-selective in its search for material. It begins with its very idea and never stops picking and choosing until the tale is told. Its motif-idea must be transcendent, supreme, isolated from all things except the secondary elements that contribute to its existence. No matter what else may ever have appeared in the artist's dreams, no matter what else may ever have happened in the life of the chief character, no matter what else may ever have happened in the world of the reader — unless these elements contributed directly to the making of this supreme moment, they have theoretically ceased to exist.

There must be isolation without there seeming to be. Give the reader the heart of the facts of the case and the soul of the truth of

THE SHORT STORY

the matter in hand and he will be both content and convinced. Art will have made everything natural and in accord with his esthetic desire.

(EXAMPLE 7.) *Nature contains no such isolation as we find in the following beginnings, yet the most sceptical literary critic will concede that the situation is made most natural:* (From "Markheim.") "Yes," said the dealer, "our windfalls are of various kinds." (From "The Ambitious Guest.") One September night a family had gathered round their hearth. . . . (From "The Necklace.") She was one of those pretty and charming girls, born by a blunder of destiny, in a family of employees. . . .

All effects in the Short Story are enlarged by the substitution of suggestion for material. All the while the writer should be aiming at the vulnerable points in the reader's imagination, using darts steeped in emotion or barbed with dynamic action. It is not that the reader forgets the trivial details that are not mentioned, but that the writer's art completely dominates his heart and mind with esthetic satisfaction.

Too bald detail is not compression. Baldness may sometimes make for force, but it seldom enhances beauty. Beauty alone can

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

contribute the all-necessary qualification of entertainment. To introduce to the reader "a bullet head" and "a blank face" is not sufficient. The reader desires most of all the expression on the face and that expression is the reflection of the heart, the vision, the vital message contained in the story. If it is to be a story that hopes to lay any claim to literary honors, the heart of the tale as well as the felicity of its expression must be there. So much effective material must be contained in the brief limits of a Short Story that it may truly be called a narrative of emotion.

This brings us back to our original premise of Art production — more true of the Short Story than of any other form of Literature:— It is the struggle within that we are ever seeking to interpret in terms of the things without.

Facts are mere static effects; it is the province of the fiction writer to reveal truth, which is facts in the process of evolution.

CHAPTER V

FACT VERSUS FICTION

TASTE VS. TRUTH ; ROMANCE AND REALISM ; THE TRUE STORY ; THE IMPROBABLE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE.

FACTS are a matter of mathematics ; they are computed according to circumstances and with certainty ; they are absolute. The material fabric of time itself is facts.

In fiction we make no attempt to reproduce facts, but to induce reality. With infinite care we select the few facts suited to our purpose and then build a period of time all our own, with a series of contingent facts, likewise of our own creation. Whether or not an actual occurrence of this sort ever happened is not our concern ; that it be natural and seem real are essential.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

Our mere existence is made up of a multitude of commonplace facts, too prosaic to mention outside of a scientific inquiry. But our real life is filled with events—eventful facts—that color existence with sorrow and happiness, pain and pleasure, ecstasy and remorse.

The facts employed in fiction are in a large measure artificial. That is, the writer selects those momentous events in the existence of men that represent the real life of man undergoing experience. These events are isolated and stripped of their countless contingent episodes. They stand out in bolder prominence than was ever apparent in actual existence, as they are focused in the magic light of narration.

(EXAMPLE 8.) Who cares whether or not John Jones woke with a snort on the morning of his wedding day—as he may have done—got soap in his eyes in his tub, suffered from a slight irritation of the eyelid the rest of the day, detected a fly in the coffee, spoiled his relish for breakfast, etc., etc. But why did he, or did he not, marry Mary Green—that is all we care to know.

The fiction writer leaves the daily minutiae to the tomes of the historian, to the volumes of

FACT VERSUS FICTION

the statistician and to the reams of myriad newspapers. He selects a single fact, event or deed, sometimes in actuality too small for history, too common for the statistician, too impersonal for the newspaper, but potentially dynamic.

(EXAMPLE 9.) *Hawthorne does not even call "The Ambitious Guest," by name, yet is he a stranger to any appreciative reader, or is he numbered among men we have met and best known? Those wonderful events in the heart of the little Indian wife, in Kipling's "Without Benefit of Clergy," would never have been known to history, statistics or journalism. Yet what meant all the deaths in India from cholera compared with the inner vision we caught of this husband, wife and child?*

Facts are material acts and conditions with the heart, soul and personality left out. If the historian throws his heart and soul into his work, critics say that he is prejudiced; if statistics are colored by fancy they are said to be inaccurate; if a newspaper voices its sentiment it is said to be a yellow journal. The criticisms are not unjust, for the efficacy of these pursuits depends absolutely on scientific precision, because they are applied science.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

But fiction, being Art, employs facts as it employs all other material media in that exquisite task of presenting an inward and invisible truth or spiritual struggle by means of outward and visible symbols.

Again the artist becomes in a large sense a creator. He selects a fragment of fact here and there and re-creates a tremendous fact of his own that plays a larger part in the experience of thousands of people than any they have known in their own lives! The hour they give to reading such and such a story becomes one of the greatest events in their emotional history. The artist does not merely imitate or mimic life, he *lives* the life and then, through his consummate skill, or Art, translates it in such familiar terms that all who know what it means to live can understand.

Fiction brings the farthest fact of history tugging at our emotions, it shelters within our breast an isolated statistic, it makes a local newspaper fact stir a nation.

(EXAMPLE 10.) *Countless tears have flown at the dramatic spectacle of "Louis XI," thanks to the dramatist; pity rises unrestrained at Kipling's recital of "The Man That Was"; "The Man Without A Country" might have been suggested by a*

FACT VERSUS FICTION

passing newspaper item (or so it seems to intimate) that was wrought into a molten message for the whole reading world.

Fiction has nothing to do with the true story as such, since it has recorded itself as a fact already and needs no further narration. The writer who writes a true story with any purpose except to supply history, statistics or the news of the day, should claim no credit for creating fiction. Fiction has its own technique that ignores all the traditions, conventions, logic, detail and sequence of facts.

In all fiction, romance can be made the most realistic, for in romance we approach closer to the heart and recede further from the common experience of the flesh. Pure romance is a delving into the ideal, draining the cup of man's dearest desires, scaling the heights of his imperial fancy. Herein the writer is called upon to materialize man's ideals and idealize his material desires.

The homely and the lowly may be made ultra-romantic without transposing them to an imagined paradise. Experience that may have a commonplace setting, yet may rise to transcendent heights. A man's heart and hope may

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

be in the clouds pursuing his ideal while his feet and daily life may be amidst murk and squalor.

That a story be romantic does not absolutely require it to delineate a youthful passion of mutual love. There are two other great ages of romance, which seldom involve a love of the sexes — childhood and old age.

(EXAMPLE II.) The aged revert to the dreams of their youth as they approach the grave; childhood dreams itself toward manhood in a serious world of make-believe. Old men reminisce over their half-won conquests of days gone by and children play they are grown-ups.

Romance deals with the improbable rather than the impossible. The laws of fact but not those of probability are violated. Raise no doubts and there will be none to suppress, is a good motto for the romantic writer to follow.

Let anyone pause to ponder over the unexpected things that have happened to alter the lives of those near and dear to him, and he will be amazed. Passing time is teeming with cosmic and chaotic facts which glorify, stagger and even slay us, the most poignant of them, coming to be looked upon in a short while,

FACT VERSUS FICTION

merely as a matter of course. Those are the facts that the writer selects. His course lies in imitating the forces of nature, and also in imitating her skill in reconciling the minds of men almost immediately to his story, no matter how new, wonderful or prodigious the related experience may seem.

The deepest impressions are created by the more intangible media, for which it is most difficult to find adequate expression.

CHAPTER VI

IMPRESSION AND EXPRESSION

PERSONAL EQUATION; REALITY; VISUALIZATION; THE WRITER'S ULTIMATE AIM.

THE true artist does not try to create an impression, but to give expression to an impression that has been already created within him.

Throughout his narrative he must never once assert that this is a story, or waive the premise that it is anything but reality. To him the impression of his inner vision is more real than the actual things of the outer life, and his single task lies in conveying that impression in its original state to the mental and emotional life of the receptive reader.

Success in literature is not only measured

IMPRESSION AND EXPRESSION

by the depth of the writer's impression, but also by the depth of the impression he makes upon his readers. The true artist cannot be selfish, and yet give full play to his powers. In the spontaneous and sincere exercise of his talent lies the revelation of his inner vision as though one gazed into his soul through a transparent glass.

The writer's impressions, thru his skill of expression, must become the reader's. By far the less difficult part of the writer's task lies in the presentation of the tangible setting of his story. But when the writer endeavors to translate his impressions of the emotional values of the tangible world, it becomes a different matter.

(EXAMPLE 12.) That a tree, or a river, or even a woman and a man, merely exist, is of little interest to the reader. But when we learn that the man and woman are lovers, and that they sat beneath the tree beside the river, we imbibe a new impression.

Each tangible object is made to have a halo, as it were, of the writer's impressionism concerning it. We see things in a new light — his light — and it is the mission of the artist to

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

make us see the world differently. Readers are made to feel something of the poetic value of even commonplace objects. The Short Story, therefore, that stirs not a single emotion, can be said to possess no artistic value.

The writer's effort is not so much to visualize as to vitalize his impression. Even the scenes described in literature, which we know most and love best, are charming, not because of what we are made to see, but because of what we are induced to feel.

An impression that is not deeper than the skin, cannot be expected to pierce the heart by means of expression; for sincere expression can never become superior to the impression, tho it is very often inferior. This simulated emotion of a tempest-in-a-teapot order is best known by the name of sentimentality.

Artists are not merely born, they are made as well. They can only expect to give adequate expression to their talents when they have acquired a technical as well as a general education. Their impressions are merely vague ecstasies until they have learned the history, habits and language of their fellow

IMPRESSION AND EXPRESSION

man and come to share in his experience. Thus sympathy arises from a perfect, mutual understanding. The gift of speech is neither more nor less natural than the gift of writing, yet we know that we must study and practice the technique of good speech—or rhetoric—for years in order to facilitate even every-day expression. In the face of these facts there are many potentially artistic writers who ignore the technique of perfect writing and give us blurred impressions that might have become literary gems with the aid of artistic expression. We all know the dreamer, or the man with artistic predisposition, who has never become the doer by learning and practicing the technique of artistic production.

Long before artistic expression is attempted, the writer should attain to that facility which germinates thought into its logical word, as seed bears its natural fruit. Thus the results and never the processes of technique are made to become forcefully apparent. Thus too the reader, thru the perfect ease and readiness with which he feels and follows the tale, is filled with an involuntary idea that he has contributed to and shares in the success of the story.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

The ultimate aim of the writer is not to see how much he can cram into his mind, but how much the reader can get out of his own soul and imagination. Impressions worthy of expression concern themselves with esthetic truths, not trite facts. All the trained writer needs is a dictionary, a library and impressions to stir his imagination.

Enthusiasm is as troublesome as it is necessary to the artistic worker; it demands a constant exercise of repression. The wheat must be separated from the chaff. Words, details and facts spring up like weeds and brushwood, choking the growth of the single resplendent flower of his impression from attaining luxuriant expression. He needs poignant details only. The characteristics he selects to delineate are those that many see, few remember, but all can feel. He seeks to express, not so much the objects that stand out before the eyes, as the elements that penetrate the heart and stir the emotions; the essentials; the internal truths.

The Short Story in its very brevity must suggest the unplumbed depth of human emotion and the boundless breadth of human experience.

CHAPTER VII

THE POTENCY OF SUGGESTION

RE-CREATION ; COLOR VALUES ; ASSOCIATION AND RELATIONSHIPS ; FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

IN the discussion of suggestion we probe the very heart of all literary endeavor.

No matter how prolific may be the idea that leads to the vision of the writer, or how grand the vision itself, or how letter-perfect the technique employed in expression, unless the literary product contains well-defined elements of suggestive matter which form a bond of sympathetic understanding with the reader, it can lay no claim to Art.

In a word, the writer must bring his story-message "home" to the reader.

This does not necessarily mean that there must be some allusion to an actual incident of

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

the reader's every-day experience, but rather to an episode within his ken, a familiar groove in his emotions, an assembly call to the sentinels of his imagination, an appeal to reminiscence, or to dreams of the future. The story is but a magic mirror into which the reader either peers and sees the very image of his most dear or most dreaded self, or steps inside as within a door and bears company to one of his choice moods in a delicious super-experience.

An illuminating synonym for suggestion is the word, re-creation. It is the artist again at his delightful task of rousing the dormant potentialities within us to mental and emotional participation. As all knowledge is more or less dependent on a recognition of relationships, so the powers within us bear fruit only when relative suggestion is brought to sun upon them.

The substance then of all suggestion is the effective employment of familiar associations and well-known relationships.

Suggestion in the Short Story must be eminently potential; every word, every phrase, every paragraph must be developed to the *n*-th

THE POTENCY OF SUGGESTION

power in the imagination and emotions of the reader. The bond of sympathetic association brings each incident within the circle of the reader's personal concern. The burden of proof, thruout, however, lies with the writer; the reader can promise nothing but acquiescence and a modicum of patience.

There are various ways in which suggestion should operate and various means employed in producing it.

(EXAMPLE 13.) *Richard Harding Davis had arrived at a sinister portion of his story when he described Tangier as "lying below him like a great cemetery of white marble"; and Hawthorne forecasts the tragedy of his hero when he introduces him: "His face wore the melancholy expression, almost despondency, of one who travels a wild and bleak road, at nightfall and alone. . . ."*

Convincing suggestion is never isolated and brazen, for then it would neither contain Art nor preserve illusion. Its entrance into the narrative is subtle, unassuming and unostentatious. It is a piece of the Short Story itself, and not a glaring patch in the fabric. Here and there we find a word artfully employed that suggests a world of color and feeling;

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

now it is a phrase that reveals an unguessed trait of character; or again we find a strong character who suggests a poignant strain of reminiscence; or a bewitching atmosphere that awakens a delightful mood; or a description that re-creates a picture we have seen in our dreams. And the glory of this induced reality lies in its quality of a supernal experience. The world owes much happiness indeed to the literary craft.

Suggestion, then, as we have just shown, is not necessarily implied thru figures of speech. The writer may concentrate his entire artfulness in making the story, as a whole, suggestive of a particular phase in life.

(EXAMPLE 14.) *The suggestion to try to perform some Christian service during Christmastide is so strongly impressed on one, after reading "The Christmas Carol," that it becomes nothing short of an impulse; the suggestion of human brotherhood is so powerful, upon reading "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," that an aristocrat, or a Levite, might be impelled to clasp the hand of a pariah.*

The function of figurative language is to make us see the object we know slightly thru its artful juxtaposition with the object we know well. This arrangement alone

THE POTENCY OF SUGGESTION

can make the picture live. And it must not include merely all we can see thru an excitement of the optic nerve, for then the longer we look the less we see. Even the visual pictures suggested, must in turn suggest the grander vision beyond, which has its seat in the emotions and in the imagination.

Verbal photographs occupy much the same place in literary art as camera photographs do in pictorial art. If it is merely a transcription of an actual scene, without being in any way enhanced or changed by the operator or writer, then the scene must contain intrinsic artistic merits to which the portrayer can lay no particular claim. But, if a catalogue or inventory is all that is needed, there are those who can do this work better than artists. Photographs are noted for their harsh tones, sharp lines and cold details; works of art are famous for their vivid reality and warm and flaming poignancy.

Verisimilitude and not verity is the aim of the fiction writer. The former is but another name for fiction; the latter an interchangeable word for fact.

There is a marked similarity between short-story narration and poetical composition, in

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

that they both compress and suggest a universe within their limits. The differentiation is that short-story suggestion is extensive, while that of poetry is intensive and melodic.

(EXAMPLE 15.) *Only the poet in his narrative dares make his statement as intensive as Poe describes the love of Annabel Lee:*

*"With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven
Coveted her me."*

Almost the same sentiment is described in prose by the same author, in "Ligeia": "That she loved me I should not have doubted; and I might have been easily aware that, in a bosom such as hers, love would have reigned no ordinary passion."

In the Short Story, therefore, both selection and suggestion play the vital parts. Selection seeks out the natural fitness of material, while suggestion employs its task of visualizing the spiritual and forming a definite impression in the reader's mind. In order, however, to perfect, thru suggestion, those outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual struggle, the writer must himself, thru sympathy, come to share the instincts and universal heart secrets of mankind.

Every beautiful passage in the Short Story must be useful as well.

CHAPTER VIII

BEAUTY AND EMBELLISHMENT

ESTHETICS; FIGURES; TASTE; REVEALMENT;
IMAGERY; THE ARTIST'S VISION.

BEAUTY in fiction is dependent on an innate sensitiveness of conception and a masterful yet delicate execution.

The esthetic quality of fiction must be integral;—intrinsic, structural and effectual. While the beauty may be capable of analysis, yet no one portion may be said to constitute it wholly. The standard of beauty is perfection itself, and a work of artistic fiction is measured by its approximation of this requisite. The writer's vision, motif and technique, and the effect upon the reader must each contribute its esthetic quota.

There are those who may presume to quarrel with this inclusive definition of fiction's requirements of beauty. They will probably re-

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

fer to many of the greatest stories written by acknowledged masters of fiction and point out that the phases of life chosen by them for depiction were not essentially beautiful. Whereupon we must arrive at the conclusion that the artist and the writer are privileged to choose from whatsoever they please in all the range of human frailty and experience. We find that the most powerful stories filling our volumes of every age are colored by crime and battle, sorrow and suffering, derangement and death.

(EXAMPLE 16.) *The following representative group of acknowledged artistic stories illustrate the matter of choice in the story material: "The Substitute," by Coppee; "The Necklace," by de Maupassant; "Markheim," by Stevenson; "The Man Who Was," by Kipling.*

The test comes in the artist's presentation. We have but to examine his vision, his motif, his technique and the effect left in our hearts and minds. In other words, we look upon his chosen subject as he sees and treats it, and not as it stands by itself, or as we choose to consider it. Whosoever our writer be, if he revels in licentiousness, condones crime, sneers

BEAUTY AND EMBELLISHMENT

at sorrow or desecrates death, he is far from being an artist.

Again we find the world owing the artist a great debt. He takes the ugliest fatalities of life and reveals the shining beauties that lie concealed within their somber depths. With the ancient poet, he exclaims, "Oh, Death, where is thy sting? Oh, Grave, where is thy victory?" Thru the glory of his vision a hero is made to shine above the carnage of battle; virtue is made to purify the stain of crime; sympathy is roused to soften sorrow; a healing calm grows out of derangement and suffering; an angel of promise rises beside the figure of grim death.

Furthermore, an antithesis is strangely induced thru the artist's realistic revealment of the more unpleasant sides of life. The moment the reader is released from the immediate thrall of the artist and his portrayal of pain, grief, bereavement, misadventure, peril, or what not, he is filled with a pleasing sense of his own security and a divorce and isolation from the imagined conditions. Yet in that very moment he may be wiping away tears over the tragedy, shuddering at the spectacle,

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

or shrinking from its brutality. It shows the difference between reality and realism; the former affects the senses first, passing thence to the imaginations and emotions; the latter directly attacks the emotions thru the imagination and then assaults the senses. All of which dispels the fallacy of "the tired business man" who shuns all forms of artistic entertainment and seeks amusement that does not demand mental or emotional participation. Artistic entertainment alone contains the elements of recreation, and it is re-creation only that he needs to dispel physical fatigue and mental worry. The lower form of amusement is oftentimes below the par of his intelligence and acts merely as a stimulant and, like all stimulants, exacts a penalty in reaction.

Thus we never should be in doubt of the beauty of the true artist's vision, no matter what the theme of the story. He must be endowed, however, with a natural taste for the esthetic and equipped with a talent for embellishment. There are isolated exceptions, consistent with the flaw in all human fabric, which prove the rule.

BEAUTY AND EMBELLISHMENT

(EXAMPLE 17.) *Thus we find de Maupassant frequently offending good taste with his licentiousness; Poe sacrificing beauty to an over-indulgence in horror; O. Henry marring rhetorical and technical perfection by his indifferent and colloquial English.*

Embellishment is the normal exercise of the imagination in giving fitting expression to pictorial thought. It is but a tool and talent to be used cunningly, economically and honestly by the creative hand. It must savor the plainest commodity of thought to the gusto of the most refined imagination and emotions.

In embellishing the unvarnished truth, we cater not only to the esthetic appetite, but also strengthen the limited reserve force of one's average powers of attention. For instance, we can watch soldiers in uniform, and equipped with the suggestive trappings of war, march past by the hour; whereas, parading civilians in a short while become tedious to the mind. One is entertainment; the other is mental effort without emotional recompense.

In the practice of 'embellishment repression again becomes the writer's only safeguard.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

It is seldom that prose can bear the full luxuriance of poetic treatment. For in every word and syllable and accent of poetry we expect rhythmic beauty; the fabric of verse is saturated with it; that alone can sustain its exalted utterance.

(EXAMPLE 18.) "*Apollo's upward fire
Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
Of brightness so unsullied, that therein
A melancholy spirit well might win
Oblivion. . . .*" shows the lush imagery of Keats.

In fiction, however, such imagery would cloy some of the other vital requisites with which beauty must share in its expression. The movement of poetry is too conducive to deliberateness; its maze of imagery forbids rapid perusal; its very lavishness is suggestive of unmeasured leisure. But in fiction we find more of the Spartan than the Sybarite qualities. We have seen that practically no subject-matter is tabooed in fiction and that always beauty is perfected thru deeds. There must be dispatch, dramatic force, action. Words must be dynamic as well as esthetic; treatment must be dramatic as well as imaginative; the effect should be awaken-

BEAUTY AND EMBELLISHMENT

ing and exciting rather than somnolent and soothing.

When all is said and done the vision is the thing. That vision which the artist sees must be passed on to his reader by means of not unlovely symbols and must be acclaimed by him beautiful. The essential point is that good fiction re-creates within the reader's breast beautiful emotions, noble desires, elevating thoughts, enthralling aspirations that not infrequently lead to better living and ideal deeds.

The instant the writer finds the point of contact between himself and his reader he creates the element known as interest.

CHAPTER IX

THE APPEAL THAT CREATES INTEREST

ENTERTAINMENT; SYMPATHY AND TOLERANCE; PLAUSIBILITY; FOUR STAGES IN DEVELOPMENT OF INTEREST.

THE fact that a prospective reader scans the title or the opening lines of a story is a guarantee of attention. Attention is not sufficient, however; there must be participation. At the very outset, the reader must be something more than merely receptive; he must contribute a modicum of emotion, and in so doing he becomes interested.

Fiction, however, in its bid for interest, is subject to the same laws that govern all inter-communication. It must contain a laudable appeal that attracts the personal concern of

THE APPEAL THAT CREATES INTEREST

the reader. His interest is inseparable from his interests.

(EXAMPLE 19.) People will stop in the street by the hundreds, always willing to lend their attention to what appears to be unusual and promises to interest them. The moment they are convinced that the incident holds no interest for them, they pass on and forget it.

Thus the writer of fiction finds himself confronted with rather an extraordinary problem. He must write about something that will interest a multitude of people; strangers to him, young and old, men and women, rich and poor, cultured and uncultured, happy and discontented. He must tell them something that will awaken a quick emotional response. In other words, he must entertain the multitude. Only the artist can accomplish such a feat as this.

What chance has the writer to address entertainingly and successfully the collective mental range of the polyglot multitude? Even in educational work there must be a progressive grading, with individual limitations all along the line. But the artist is a dealer in emotions and employs mentality only as a

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

means to an end. There is a certain universality of heart interest, wherein lies the secret of all Fine Art appeal.

Once the writer makes his story interesting and plausible, the reader will not ask scientific questions. The element of plausibility is one of the most potent devices of appeal.

(EXAMPLE 20.) Halévy in opening the story of "The Insurgent," makes the tale seem so much a fact that its very plausibility lures the reader into following the opening incident to its culmination: "Prisoner," said the president of the military tribunal, "have you anything to add in your own defense?"

In fiction the mere interest of the reader from beginning to end is scarcely enough to warrant its production. There must be a stronger outpouring of emotion elicited. There must rise, at the will of the artist behind the pen, unrestrained sympathy or hearty indignation, and ultimate satisfaction.

A man cannot pass by a brother in distress; he is impatient to give a helping hand to bring a criminal either to retribution or to justice; he is curious to know how a cultured beggar lost his social equilibrium; he will travel

THE APPEAL THAT CREATES INTEREST

thru a story to see an act of mercy; he will unconsciously lean a little closer to hear a tale of the man who was. These are a few of the infinitesimal sympathy-lures of the human heart. The writer who can not only make these emotional experiences live, but also make the reader live them shall never cease to be in demand.

It is not necessary, then, for the reader to have had actual experiences such as those depicted in fiction, but rather, to know that he could have such an one, and to feel that a given experience is his own. Effective fiction puts the reader in a potential mood.

(EXAMPLE 21.) There are frequent examples among children, where this mood clings to them long after the printed page is withdrawn, in effect that they become veritable robbers, desperadoes, Indian fighters and adventurers.

In the reader's unselfish appreciation of the poignant experiences of others, he comes gradually to recognize the best elements within himself. There is no human pleasure akin to following and applauding in others that gracious magnanimity which we are sure we would bestow under like conditions. Thus

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

part of man's interest in artistic fiction lies in an association with his better self and an opportunity to become better acquainted with his unrevealed ideals.

There are four stages, as a rule, in the development of the reader's interest: The more or less commonplace human interest first arrests his attention. Compelling personal interest next wakens his curiosity. Then universal heart interest grips his emotions. And, finally, plausible story interest holds him—mind, heart and soul—until the tale is told.

(EXAMPLE 22.) In "*The Fall of the House of Usher*," we find these four phases of interest, following one upon the other, in close succession: "During the whole dull, dark and soundless day," arrests the attention; "With the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit," wakens the curiosity; "The writer spoke of acute bodily illness, of a mental disorder which oppressed him," grips the emotions; and "About the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven," holds mind, heart and soul till the tale is told.

Technique is largely responsible for holding

THE APPEAL THAT CREATES INTEREST

the story interest of the reader after he has once pierced the heart of the story. It passes then into the classification of entertainment of an extraordinary kind. In the Short Story we find an ever-ascending scale of interest, and a compelling suspense to be maintained, that require both skillful and finished treatment, yet with never the slightest indication that there is any such thing being resorted to at all as treatment or technique.

There is always something that must be developed to a state of maturity or perfection, and ever a sense of leading up to something higher and ultimate, that keeps the reader absorbed. At length, when every promise has been fulfilled, attention has been justified, curiosity satisfied, emotions gratified, then we may say that an interesting, entertaining tale has been translated into an emotional experience.

Emotion need not always be the direct reaction from a personal experience; it may rise with equal force as the result of a profound sympathy with humanity and its joys and sorrows.

CHAPTER X

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EMOTION

MOOD; FEELING; PASSION; ELOQUENCE; PATHOS.

TO learn the psychology of a series of acts that make a Short Story, is equivalent to tracing its emotional development back to its source. There would be a hundred-fold more sympathy and tolerance in this erring world if we but knew the intimate history of every crime. Many a man condemns another on the instant knowledge of his fault, and himself commits the same error later under the same provocative conditions.

The purpose of fiction should never be to make us sympathize with the criminal and

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EMOTION

condone his crime. But through a more perfect knowledge of emotions and motives the reader learns that tolerant truth which tempers all judgment with mercy.

A Short Story is the emotional history, or psychology, of the dramatic situation culminating in the climax of the story itself. Only such data as contributes to the given emotional history is needful or acceptable for the writer's purpose. There is no single action throughout the narration that is independent of the grand climax. In fact, so intensive is the Short Story, that there should seldom be an action that is not the result of emotion, or that does not arouse emotional response.

The writer is naturally desirous of producing an effect upon the reader that is a counterpart in strength and truth of his own vision and impression. In no phase of narration is he called upon to restrain himself more than under the pressure of his own emotions. The moment he becomes ultra-emotional the taint of sentimentality will begin to creep into his expression.

The fact that disgust, fear, horror and terror are the easiest elements with which to pro-

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

duce emotional effects, makes them technically the less artistic media. The young artist is often over-zealous and over-colors his pictures with lurid contrasts and degenerates fine emotion into melodramatic passion. Maturity teaches that simplicity is always most effective. Great deeds seldom happen amidst the blare of a trumpet; heroism flourishes most beautifully far from the applauding crowds. Nature stages her dramas and tragedies in a silent, majestic movement that overwhelms the multitude. In the moulten flow of Vesuvius and the devastating tide of the flood there is a relentless softness of approach that heightens the emotional pitch of their victims to fear, terror and horror. It is the emotional effect that the writer must make tremendous, reverberating, startling, even appalling, thru the dynamic deed that forms his climax.

There is a three-fold status of emotion to be considered in analyzing the work of a writer. We must consider the stress of emotion under which the story was written; we must weigh the psychology of the chief character and the emotional potentiality accumu-

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EMOTION

lated thru the dexterous planning and the agency of technique; and, finally, we must judge from the emotional effect upon the reader.

The writer who does not feel each emotional stage of his story with all the poignancy of the actual experience can scarcely expect his readers to feel more deeply than himself. The artist does not merely see the pain, the joy, the love and the bereavement that gives his story life and realism—he *feels* them. He is writing a story of life—not the life that we see, for that is only action, but the story of life that we feel, and which develops into deeds.

What are characters in a story but puppets, if they have no emotional significance? The smile, the tear, the gesture, the look, mean no more than features, fingers and toes if we do not know their genesis. In fact, they mean less than fingers and toes to the puppet-man, for they are needed to make a perfect puppet, whereas symbols of emotion would seem out of place.

As to the emotion of the reader, we expect that to be a counterpart of the original im-

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

pression of the writer. Is the picture as moving and as beautiful as the vision, we ask, or is it only an echo of the writer's magnificent impression? Of one thing we may rest assured, the effect on the reader will never be more beautiful than the vision that enthralled the artist.

A story which is said to be filled with, or to contain, emotion, lacks artistic potentiality completely if it fails to induce emotion. Emotional power, expression or effect cannot be judged at all by laws and standards of mentality. It is measured alone by its power of appeal to an individual heart and by the depth of an individual soul. An illiterate imbecile can be made to weep over the same simple tale of a child's tragedy that makes a childless, crusty old professor gulp—if the writer is sufficiently an artist to induce the glamor of illusion. Emotion is personal, yet universal; Art must find the touchstone of its universality.

Feeling is the common gift; sympathy is more rare, and is the chief requisite of the writer of fiction. He must possess that power, which is not inaptly expressed in the phrase,

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EMOTION

"getting under the skin." This implies the emotional sight, to which all flesh phenomena becomes a psychological record of what is going on underneath it. Earth has not the power to build a wall or a barrier that can shut out human emotion; even the death of the most obscure raises an emotion of pity, awe or grief in the heart of every man who gazes upon it, that will bear fruit in his life and tincture his own death vision.

As a man feels, so he *is*; and as he *is*, *is* how he should appear in fiction.

Fiction should suggest the farthest-most boundaries of the reader's imagination, rather than depict the limited confines of the writer's immediate view.

CHAPTER XI

THE SCOPE OF IMAGINATION

GLAMOR; FANTASY; THE ARTIST'S RIGHT TO FAME.

THE imagination is the herald and messenger of the emotions. It is the farthest out-post between the mind and the soul. It is the eyes of the heart and the painter of the vision. Imagination bears the groping impression from the innermost depths of man's feeling into the clear light of his understanding.

Thus we see that imagination is indispensable to the story writer. As his pictorial sense it records emotional impressions and creates to fit them symbolic expression. There is instantaneous and continuous inter-communic-

THE SCOPE OF IMAGINATION

tion between the emotions and the imagination. Every undue throb of the heart flashes an impression on the sensitive surface of the imagination; every phantasm causes a glow of emotional response.

It is doubtful if the imagination grows in proportion to, or gains profitable stimulation from, the logical and mechanical processes of thought. Altho the increased knowledge naturally widens the scope of the imagination and multiplies the number of further relationships and objects capable of suggestive association, the imagination cannot be forced by anything except inspiration.

While to imagine anything means to picture it mentally, it does not necessarily imply a physical picture. It means something far deeper than to visualize an object; it signifies to realize a condition. The phrase, "a picture no artist can paint," contains an element of truth that, sooner or later, vexes every artist. There are emotional images of the soul that are too profound, too vast, too subtle for pigment, or tissue, or language. There is a quality in the salt of every tear that is not substantive; there is plaint in every sigh that

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

is not sound; there is a soul revealment in facial expression that has no synonym in any dictionary; there is a certain awe in the presence of birth or death that cannot be photographed.

Hence the huge task that lies before the writer—which the artist-writer alone can accomplish.

In the first place, the writer has perceived his vision, he knows it “by heart.” His alert imagination responds instantaneously with more or less complete symbolistic data. An artist cannot possibly restrain an exquisite impression, or subject-matter for a *chef d’œuvre*. It becomes an obsession that cloys his emotions and imagination and blocks progress until it has been unburdened. Beyond this the resplendence of his expressed vision will depend on the suggestive fertility of his imagination, the reproductive power of his imagery. As the Apostle says, with a sweep of imagination that makes the artistic soul glow, “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. . . .”* That measure of glory with which the artist

*(I Cor. xv, 41.)

THE SCOPE OF IMAGINATION

images his impressions will determine his right to Fame.

All power, then, lies in the selection of symbol. Nothing within the farthest reaches of the deepest soul need languish for expression. If the precise symbol is chosen there need be never a fear of misinterpretation. We arrive at the analysis of the perfect artist, his requisite gifts, talents and education. He must have infinite powers of perceptivity, seeing thru the canopy of heaven itself and almost to the Throne of the Creator of All; he must be gifted with an imagination so fertile that upon sowing a mother's tears, an army of future-born men will rise to carve the way thru the world's heart to the temple of Fame; he must have a heart that is bruised and troubled over Mother Earth's cares as he listens to a sighing zephyr; he must be master of a technique that will cause words to bleed and weep and will people the printed pages with images that never fade.

Imagination is the key that unlocks the treasures of the heart and soul. Yet it can claim a more material function in its being the custodian of all individual knowledge. We

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

do not *know* a thing until we have imaged it, or given it a relative position alongside something we already know. Thus we see that the very manner and means of acquiring and perceiving mathematical and historical knowledge are applied to our appreciation of entertainment and literature. The reader will neither laugh nor cry until the depicted incident is associated with some personal experience, or common symbol of laughter or tears. The imagination is quicker than conscious thought. In proportion to his own powers of imagination and the imaginative suggestion of the writer, all relative knowledge and emotion on the subject are brought to bear witness, instantaneously and delightfully.

Exaggeration is not a property of imagination; for exaggeration means to enlarge an object beyond its actual proportions and to ignore truth. Imagination makes some things seem greater than they really are because of the host of relative images that are raised to enhance and show the glory of the truth within.

The volatile spirits of the imagination are

THE SCOPE OF IMAGINATION

fantasy. In fantasy we take the intelligent mind on an excursion in search of wonder, delight, and strange experiences. Yet thru a sincerity of narration, and an assumption of truth that all fiction premises, realism is established that makes the tale rank with original experience. Fantasy is the delightful region of If and Almost, made facts of easy attainment. Thru its delightful agency, dreams, visions and ghosts are made to become tangible, real and commonplace.

(EXAMPLE 23.) *What a rare delight are the prophetic dreams of "Peter Ibbetson"! although the reader does pause now and then to see if he can fathom where the dream experience ends and the waking life begins, yet he never questions the reality of it all. Crawford has made his "Cecelia" a thousand times more real thru the web of dreams. "Brushwood Boy" is as much a romance of dreams as it is of day doings.*

Imagination is truly the heart of thought-life and thru its operation writer and reader are brought in touch with each other's emotional life. Whatever is, is real; whatever is imagined, is. Just as tender an emotion may be created on imagining another's distress, as on witnessing that distress. In the

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

one case we see pain written in the bodily symbols of torture; in the other we read the pain thru suggestive symbols of agony. In both cases we imagine the pain that lurks beyond actual sight, in the tissues of the flesh and in the agony of the heart.

Human understanding, appreciation and sympathy are all within easy reach of the herald and messenger of the emotions — the imagination.

*If there be a moral, or a motive,
let the story in its entirety contain it;
for a single bald assertion of it will
destroy the desired effect.*

CHAPTER XII

THE POWER OF MOTIVE

THEME; MORALS; UNIQUE POWER OF THE ARTIST; SERMONS; THE UNCONSCIOUS MOTIVE.

TRUE art is always useful. Not in the same sense, perhaps, as industrial, domestic, culinary, and a host of so-called arts, that are more truly skilled sciences. That which aids, instructs, stimulates, entertains and elevates the mind and the soul is most assuredly as useful as that which helps, feeds, nourishes and strengthens the body and its sinews. One satisfies all man's material wants; the other gratifies all his spiritual desires.

Art has something to tell that makes men richer, bigger, and better. In writing the big

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

story the writer is fulfilling a mission; the story itself is a message. It is not merely a vehicle for whiling away a more or less pleasant hour. The reader must be set ahead in advance of where he stood before reading the story. He must know more, he must have a greater capacity for feeling and have acquired a wider range of vision. In other words, fiction should contain a motive of the writer and have a motivating effect upon the reader.

The artist has a unique power within his grasp, which he wields in some measure every time he gives expression to his vision. Beside beauty of vision and truth of picture, he needs strength of purpose. That moment a writer feels that he has mastered the elements of beauty and truth, is the one in which he should choose to bring a purpose to bear in all his future work. When an artist's work begins to make a multitude think a single thought with conviction, we say that he has "found" himself.

(EXAMPLE 24.) Meunier strengthened the beauty of his sculpture by subjecting it to his motive. Volumes of historical data and fact-examples had been written concerning Labor, but never before

THE POWER OF MOTIVE

had the soul of it been shown to such great advantage, revealing the joy, the dignity and the might of Labor. Jules Breton and Millet have shown the same spirit in their paintings. Edwin Markham, in his poem, "The Man With the Hoe," has contributed to Art one of the most sublime documents she possesses. In that grand poem we see Labor in all her vicissitudes: In want, in plenitude; in shame, in glory; in defeat, in triumph.

The impulsive heart is the steering-gear of the man; and the writer's power lies in the fact that whatever influence he has, is with the reader's emotions. The elements he controls are like lightning in the revealment of truth and conditions, and in striking at the heart of wrong and delusion; and his words resemble thunder, reverberating from heart to heart until men realize the significance of the storm.

(EXAMPLE 25.) *The good work that Dickens accomplished thru his motive-fiction would be difficult to calculate. Every story that he wrote was aimed at some concrete evil or abstract vice. Dickens did more than any man of his time to abolish the pernicious debtor's prison. We find a protest against it in a dozen places. What greater—or more entertaining—sermon on the vice of avarice was ever preached than "A Christmas Carol"?*

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

Herein lies no argument that the writer must of necessity be a preacher; altho it is not inapt to suggest that the majority of licensed preachers abandon their dry-as-dust sermons and adopt fiction as the opening wedge to the hearts of their ennued congregations. But the writer stands before the hearts and minds of men just as imposing and as influential a figure as the preacher. He brings the Infinite nearer by leading man into the presence of his own soul thru the self-revealment of Art; he lifts all men higher by re-creating the noblest and loftiest instincts within them. Can this tremendous power of the writer exert itself fittingly in a meaningless story, like a fluttering, beautiful bird in a gilded cage?

The reader who is sincere will not tell you that he is looking for a treatise on astronomy in the pages of a fiction story. He has a right to expect entertainment from every fiction story he can find. Thus we arrive at that which constitutes both the power and the pitfall of purposeful fiction.

Fiction's motivating power becomes void the moment it reveals its motive. The reader

THE POWER OF MOTIVE

must be made to feel the underlying purpose in the tale before he thinks it — which usually is after he finishes the story. Thru its realism, he accepts it as an experience in life over which he has no control. Its truth is made so convincing that he does not question it. The whole affair has happened in a way that commands both his respect and his sympathy ; if he came across the same thing himself to-day he would — after reading this particular story — do precisely what the hero did. Perhaps he finds himself in sympathy with something, with which he had had no patience at all before. As a matter of fact, the story has taught him a lesson, to which — if it had entered his thoughts while reading — he would have refused to listen at all.

Man will submit to the most abstract, dull, scientific and even distasteful instruction in all the world, if the knowledge is sugar-coated with entertainment.

(EXAMPLE 26.) Call it a story, or what you will, "*The Ambitious Guest*" is as excellent a sermon, or treatise, or essay—in story form—on *The Emptiness of Human Ambition*, as you will find anywhere. Emerson's *Essay on Friendship*, or any sermon or address ever penned or spoken, will not

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

stir the emotions of a countless audience with such a tender and motivating appeal for friendship as "Tennessee's Partner."

It is more than a century since readers have been wont to take their philosophy undiluted. They seldom discuss underlying principles—elements, powers, causes and laws. Works of that stamp have gone out of fashion. Yet it is difficult to find a man who is not fond of airing his own ideas on the evolution, existence and ultimate end of things. Great artists are great philosophers, and we find their work teeming with a love for disseminating knowledge. Man's mind and soul crave philosophy, and every writer commends his work to fame who weaves it intangibly amidst the warp and woof of his fiction fabric.

(EXAMPLE 27.) *A story appearing in the Pall Mall Magazine had for its theme the philosophic problem in the abstract: Which is the greater—Life or Death? A bald statement of the question would have ruined it both as a question of philosophy or as a fiction story. The author resolved his prime elements into the characters of a man and his wife. The man was possessed with a mad lust for blood, violence and killing. The woman worshiped life. A feud arose between the two that could only end in the triumph of one or the other.*

THE POWER OF MOTIVE

The man at length won eternal notoriety by killing a noted desperado. He came home triumphant to break the news to his wife, whom he found undergoing the agony of childbirth. In the birth of his child and her heroism he saw that Life was really the greatest thing in the world.

There is an unconscious motive as well as a conscious purpose in Art. Whether intentional or not, fiction Literature has always been a necessary supplement to History in order to gain a perfect sympathetic and tolerant knowledge of a given period. History tells what the people did; fiction, drama, poetry show—thru a reflection of customs, morals, temper, emotions—*why* they did it. Thus a fiction transcription of an episode during a given time—if it be the inner truth—reveals reasons for general conditions that we otherwise might never have guessed.

(EXAMPLE 28.) *Whether it was Kipling's conscious motive or not to give to his readers an historical and motivating impression of England's foothold in India, he has accomplished that end an hundred-fold times stronger than any contemporaneous history. Running thru his tales of British India is a history of heroism, sacrifice, patriotism, and almost fanaticism, of the English soldier and colonist that is not surpassed in splendor in all his-*

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

tory. The awe-inspiring heat, the loneliness of exile, the man-killing insects, reptiles, and beasts, the half-score years of unbroken service, the patience under galling situations, the thirst and dread disease—and the British man staring, grinning, defying it all, but never flinching!

Fiction's form of narration can never be violated by the introduction of a didactic note. Yet it may teach us Geography thru wonder and adventure; Science, by filling it with heart interest; Mathematics, by means of tales of deduction and induction; and even Natural History and other subjects when they are employed as a setting.

We must never lose sight of essentials, however, as long as we are dealing with fiction. There must be a story to tell!

Fiction cannot correctly be prostituted as a political screed; it cannot be foisted as propaganda; it cannot become a thinly disguised tract; it cannot utter a shriek of personal opinion. Fiction knows no creed; no color; no race; no politics. It is impartial, unpartisan, impersonal, just, kind, tolerant, sympathetic, good, moral, not unreligious, and on the side of righteous law.

*Setting should be broken up into bits,
so that it will mingle in the form of
familiar particles with every portion
of the story.*

CHAPTER XIII

THE INFLUENCE OF ATMOSPHERE

COLOR OF MEDIUM; METAPHOR; ATMOSPHERE
AS AN ABSTRACT QUALITY; TWO ASPECTS.

ATMOSPHERE is the hand-maid of illusion. It is the magic exhalation of individual charm that breathes thru a story, and produces immediate recognition in the eyes of the heart. Atmosphere is the evanescent inspiration of the writer that creates the personality of the story.

The quality of good atmosphere is as delicate as the fleeting scent of the mignonette; in fact the more delicate it is, the stronger the vision that it will re-create. The object of atmosphere is not to reproduce actual physical sensations of smell, taste, sound, touch and visuality; but to induce powerful reminiscent

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

reaction. Fiction does not pretend to bring physical contact, but soul experience. Atmosphere is an unostentatious array of symbolistic data, drawn from the material world in the main; yet only for our original purpose of setting forth the spiritual struggle in a given fictive situation.

Atmosphere is an abstract quality that we breathe, then, and not a collection of concrete objects of tangibility. We identify the characters and characteristics of a given story by means of a poignant atmosphere of association. A faded flower carries the reader back fifty years, perhaps, to sweetheart days, to the nuptial tie, to the birds singing beside an open grave—we all have our faded-flower hour! Somewhere in the life of every man there has come a sweet taste of music that is locked up in some hallowed closet in his breast. There is a master's key that will unlock them all, and that is atmosphere induced thru the artist's craftsmanship. The most charming of all the effects of atmosphere is that of distance brought near; the intervening years compressed into a glorious hour of reminiscence; gray hairs changed to auburn curls just once

THE INFLUENCE OF ATMOSPHERE

again. The phrase of the poet sums it up beautifully: "Make me a child again, just for to-night." Therein lies one of the grandest opportunities within the grasp of the artist-writer: to make world-old men children again just for a night!

(EXAMPLE 29.) *One of the best recent examples of atmospheric stories is one called "Nocturne," in which the singing of an old song is chosen for its theme. The night upon which it was sung marked the episode that lost the hero his bride. His best friend stole her from him. Twenty years passed and the two men meet again; the hero is wealthy, his former rival is destitute. The woman in the case has been dead many years. Both men cherish the memory. The man of wealth is a collector of jewels. The rival attempts to rob him that night. He is detected by his friend, who goes downstairs and out of doors in the moonlight. The night is a counterpart of that upon which each had sung his love song twenty years ago. The rival has forgotten all in his lust for jewels. His friend softly whistles, then sings their love nocturne. The thief is unaffected at first, then the power of reminiscence pierces his heart thru his memory—and his soul is soothed.*

Rich and mellow atmosphere is chiefly dependent on the fact that each of us, as he grows older, takes a different, and yet a not

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

dissimilar aspect of the years gone by. Whether they have been happy or harrowing, the prospect fills us all alike with the inevitable sadness that the loss of precious possessions must ever inspire in human hearts. We realize that our childhood, our youth, our prime—with all their dreams but half-spun—are gone forever!

Taking literally these unchangeable elements in the human career, men make of their lives-lived an Academy of Fine Arts, wherein are arranged certain masterpieces of painting, poetry and music which they have bought in other days with the silver that streaks their hair. Let come a glorious patch of familiar color, an unctuous line of half-forgotten poetry, or a bar of by-gone melody, and their magic gallery is opened wide and they stand enraptured looking or listening thru the misty vista of years.

There is not a man but has his gallery of Arts; he needs only the magic key of reminiscence to open wide—upon a mayhap sordid present—some splendid scene, with its wholesome influences, of a more beautiful past.

Specifically, atmosphere is the process that

THE INFLUENCE OF ATMOSPHERE

creates the reader's mood and brings it into perfect accord with the story's setting. The reader is wont to exclaim, "I know precisely what is meant, for I have felt the same thing myself!" Some writers have a remarkable power for generating atmosphere and so suffusing their work with it that the reader's mind is permeated and his soul saturated. Such illusion as this is a near approach to perfect Art.

(EXAMPLE 30.) *Poe is a master-creator of atmosphere. Thruout "The Fall of the House of Usher" is to be found one of the finest examples of cultivated atmosphere in all Literature: "I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher . . . An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphurous luster over all. His long, improvised dirges will ring forever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber."*

Atmosphere is employed, not only to bring by-gone periods of time near, but also any remote quality, scene, character, emotion or other requisite to the story in hand. The time

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

of Christ, the quality of terror with which most stories of the Reign of Terror reek, luxurious scenes of Oriental splendor, characters that loom above the ordinary man or crawl in ignominy beneath his feet, or what you will, are all available to the artist-writer thru his command of atmosphere. To have lived in ancient times, to have met in life the character to be depicted, to have visited a foreign land, are not essentials for transcribing their emotions, their truths, their life—if one is an artist and has a fair knowledge of history and customs.

Oftentimes it happens that a person who has lived most of his life in a distant land, can tell less about it than the writer who has but a smattering knowledge of its physical geography or mineral wealth. The reason for this anomaly lies in the fact that one man tells of the country as it actually is and appears to him, without surrounding it with the atmosphere of interpretation, in terms of his own understanding, that brings its wonders straight to the reader's or listener's heart.

Atmosphere has two aspects: One lies in the process of translating the entire narration

THE INFLUENCE OF ATMOSPHERE

into the terms of the story's theme; the other must seek out and command the reader's perfect understanding and sympathy thru his emotions. The perfect atmosphere is affected by bringing about a point of contact between these two aspects. Both are well presented in the following example.

(EXAMPLE 31.) *A story of the Orient was printed during the year, the author of which had neither been in the Orient nor met an Oriental. He resorted to atmosphere: "There is but one passion in the Orient that is greater than love—it is hate. Love in the East is numbered, for the most part, among the delights and pleasures of the flesh; hate is reckoned among the all-consuming passions of the soul . . . When the village of Kismeth baked and sweated during the long, terrible nights of the dry season, the Hill of Blessings was veiled in cooling zephyrs that were said by the natives to descend straight from heaven . . ."*

All description is not atmospheric; especially when it is employed to delineate character. Introductory description in the Short Story should be employed essentially for the purpose of inducing atmosphere that will cling to the reader to the very end, coloring the fabric of the tale as it advances.

(EXAMPLE 32.) *The following opening para-*

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

graph played its part all thru the story: "An Indian sun beat down with relentless fury upon the little garrison town of Lucknow. There was no escaping that terrific heat down there in the sun-baked streets. It could be seen traveling along in shimmering lanes and entering open windows and doorways, like a myriad of heated lances that brought the inmates into the open, panting for air."

Harrowing details are often introduced with the mistaken idea that they create atmosphere, whereas any data that raise an emotion of horror or disgust that is discordant with, or is of a higher pitch than, the crises in the story, will make an anti-climax, or cause a digression of emotional interest. Thruout narration there must be felt a discreet intimacy in the writer's touch that is too well-bred to introduce any details which would not bear promiscuous relation.

The quintessence of atmosphere is expressed in glamor. It is atmosphere raised to a nervous, scintillating pitch that becomes hysteria in any but the artist's hand. It should be employed only when the particular story demands extraordinary, almost exciting, qualities.

(EXAMPLE 33.) Poe in "*The Tell-Tale Heart*" has exemplified this principle perfectly, dealing with

THE INFLUENCE OF ATMOSPHERE

a theme that is filled to the point of bursting with pitiable glamor, yet is handled with an artistic repression that commands continual admiration: "True! — nervous — very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses — not destroyed — not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Harken! and observe how healthily — how calmly I can tell you the whole story."

Finally atmosphere is the color of the soul of the story that is felt rather than seen. It deals with the study and adaptability of color values and the characteristic and intrinsic effectiveness of materials. It is the medium of impressionism. If emotion be the soul of the story, atmosphere is the breath that tells us of the soul's existence.

Harmony in short-story fiction consists in a pleasing, logical, contributive and effective agreement of every element in the story with its climax-situation.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHARM OF HARMONY

UNITY; ORGANISM VS. ORGANIZATION; COLOR;
HARMONY OF PLOT AND THEME; TONE
EFFECTS.

PERFECT harmony is the apex of artistic achievement.

In the realm of music, a breach of the laws of harmony is a mark of mediocrity. In painting, a violation of balance and proportion will bar a work from recognition. To ignore meter and rhythm in poetry is, practically, to ignore poetry itself. An observance of the dramatic unities is essential to success in writing drama.

Fiction Literature is unquestionably one of the Fine Arts also, yet this element of harmonization which we find so essential in the

THE CHARM OF HARMONY

other Arts seems strangely lacking. An examination of the fiction deluge of the day discloses the fact that a haphazard sort of discord seems to be one in its long list of inherent vices. Not that the writers of best-sellers and worst-products are iconoclasts, for that implies a knowledge of traditions and rules and the courage of fanaticism. No, most of our popular writers "just happened" to write and, until they die, will be amazed over the way they are handed money for writing reams of stuff that literally tumble out of their heads. Which leads us to the conclusion that only a modicum of Literature is being written to-day.

In this matter of harmonization alone, there lies a supreme opportunity before the present-day fiction writer. It cannot be accomplished at once by the novice, nor is there a limit to the beauty of which it is capable thru the craftsmanship of the artist-writer. It means to make fiction melodic and mellifluous, organic and unified. It means raising the scale of the external excellencies to meet the magnificence of the internal vision no matter to what heights that may attain.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

Harmony is not a super-qualification of fictional Literature, but one of its concomitants. Each fictional creation is an organism, not an organization. This is more especially true of the Short Story. As the personal and individual organs, members, vitals and mind of a man are limited and characteristic of that man and his vicissitudes, so should the elements of the organic story and its manifestations be in perfect accord with the heart, or climax, of that story.

Such a unity as we desire would include harmony of plot and theme, with form and tone. Plot and theme set the pitch, mark the time, mold the form and guide the tone. Our soul may be enriched by the experience contained in a story, but the memory of the story itself should become one of a personality we have known and will not soon forget. Our harmonious story becomes either an individual whom we shall take to our breasts as a welcome friend, or coldly look upon as an impressing acquaintance whom we could never cherish; altho, in either case, we will have been deeply moved and cannot soon forget the personality.

THE CHARM OF HARMONY

(EXAMPLE 34.) Taking, for example, the story, "Nocturne," referred to in another place: There is an unusual opportunity in the selection of such a theme for charming harmony. There is music in the word itself and it takes a minor key. A mood asserts itself that molds treatment, language and phraseology. We close our eyes and there is a haunting melody floating thru the moonlit spaces. "Saturday night came, resplendent in a fragrant and warm early-summer night's splendor. Above all, floating serenely and regally amidst a robe of silver clouds, with gem-like stars studding its hem, was the fairest moon I ever saw." And then the gust of nocturnal melody sweeps the hearts of the little group: "I longed to be out there amidst the glories of the night with no roof but the moonlit heavens and the twinkling stars. The others seemed to share my mood, for a care-free gayety seized our hearts and we went swinging hand in hand down the broad lawn toward Roaring Road, now a silvery strip in the moonlight." Then follows the singing of the song that presaged coming grief in its searching sadness: "We burst forth as tho in tribute, with a tender Night Song. For a mile we wandered on, still hand in hand, our throats caroling the music in our hearts. And now the song seemed to adapt itself to the night scene: the soft cadences like the moonlit shadows themselves; its pure flow of melody so like the broad silvery moonbeams; its appeal as sweet and sad as the fading stars. For me—and me alone, as I supposed—it became that night and

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

for my whole life thru, my nocturne, my sacred even-song and song of songs."

In harmony we find something deeper, sweeter and more charming than in a mere observance of the laws of unity. It is the requisite of the skilled artisan, at least, to practice unity; while harmony is the emotional expression of the cultivated artist. Unity is but cold, inert elegance; harmony is warm, throbbing beauty. Yet it is unity that makes harmony possible. Despite this vital provision, an appalling quantity of the present fiction output makes no pretension to grammatical, rhetorical, dramatic and short-story unity!

From the viewpoint of unity even, it may be readily seen how its observance becomes a contributive factor and force without which one can scarcely reckon. Every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph — and even the length of the story itself — becomes significant and atmospheric. The stately story has a stately movement; the tragedy has a grayness of tone, that discloses nothing, yet suggests the theme; the sweet, gentle story sheds its sweetness by every means of significant expression within its ken.

THE CHARM OF HARMONY

(EXAMPLE 35.) *The theme of the short story, "The Great Temptation," is founded on the premise that the one weak joint in a young monk's armor of faith is his love of music. At length he is seduced, out of revenge, by a Moorish maiden. The theme affords an excellent opportunity for luxurious harmony: "The next day, Padre Hugo came again and listened with closed eyes. For a moment he stood thus, as tho petrified; in that moment all else was forgotten, and Raphallah, the daughter of the Crescent, softly, like a cool breath of night wind, entered the burning heart of Padre Hugo, the son of the Cross . . . Her music had died in the agony of that moment; even the song of the hill birds was stilled—yet the air seemed filled with the beat of drums and vibrant with martial music."*

Tho only the artist can attain unified harmony, yet every writer may, thru taking infinite pains, acquire a style of harmonious unity.

Harmonious unity implies a rejection of discordant material from the mass that flows into the writer's thoughts in his travail of expression. To say that the writer chooses or selects what he shall use in the building of his story gives a mistaken idea. It lends the impression that he is intent on nothing but garnishings and that he drops the story to go in

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

search of embellishment. The artistic Short Story is not built like a house, piece by piece. Nor is it a collection of vari-colored particles, like a crazy quilt, making a design that is indisputably harmonious, but, after all, remains only a more or less pleasing organization of colors. A true work of Art is an organism that is born a perfect product in the spirit before it takes on the substance of concrete expression. Like all created individual beings, its hairs are numbered and an inch can neither be added nor taken away from its stature without disfiguring it. If it is a wild creature, everything about it will be in harmony with its barbarism; if it is a cultured being, it will bear the personal unities of good taste, good conduct and good breeding.

An organism is a unit of animated consistency. It can do nothing to violate the rational laws that called it into being and that guide its normal life; else we call it abnormal. If the mind refuses to act in accordance with the normal procedure of daily existence, we say it is deranged; if any part of the body fails to functionize, it is without doubt diseased or paralyzed; if a musical composition is not con-

THE CHARM OF HARMONY

sistent with its own laws and contains internal discords we must condemn it as imperfect; if a poem of lofty sentiment descends to a mean plane of recital we cannot commend its euphony; if a Short Story violates its essential unity by employing expression-material that is in the least inconsistent with its spiritual nature, it cannot lay claim to artistic treatment.

Harmony induces perfect illusion because all contributive materials synchronize so perfectly that the faculties of perception become prejudiced witnesses in favor of conviction.

(EXAMPLE 36.) We turn once again to Poe's incomparable piece of fiction harmony, "*The Fall of the House of Usher*." We may begin at any portion of the weird tale, skim its surface, probe its mystery, scan its rhythm, catalog its external allusions, listen to its phraseology, study its movement, compare its first sentence with its last—the title, plot, theme, treatment and effect are unity and harmony itself.

It must be borne in mind that conflict and discord are not synonymous. Conflict is essential to the theme of every stirring story: the conflict of man's desires and wants with the opposing obstacle. There must be no conflict,

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

however, of principles, laws or standards, or the result is likely to be chaos.

To have the ending an echo of the beginning, or the beginning foreshadow the ending, is a vital aid to harmony. All but the leading character is a color pigment on the canvas and on a par with the other unities of time, place and effect. The writer has nothing to do but mind his literary business: he has no concern with any detail that has nothing to do with the narration of his story, or, to be exact, his climax, which is, in reality, the story.

Tone effects are sometimes enhanced by a contrast, but never by a combination, of harmony and discord. Thus the intrinsic harmony of the motif remains unhampered by the discordant opposition of the obstacle.

Finally, harmony must have variety of expression or it will produce monotony. The same motif must always be maintained, but the key should be changed constantly to afford tolerable variety. Never-ending sorrow, happiness, success or failure ceases to remain even interesting. Harmony in fiction is Life under the pressure of Time and Fate, Love and Death.

Deeds show the soul of man; words his mind; and pictures his body.

CHAPTER XV

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

LIFE; CHARACTERS; HUMAN INTEREST; HEART
INTEREST AND STORY INTEREST; NATURAL-
NESS.

THE two great fundamental human motivating forces are hope (anticipation) and desire (ambition). The realization of hope, or the gratification of desire, constitutes the working basis for the action of the story with the "happy ending." A failure to bring these two emotions to a successful culmination results in a tragic or semi-tragic termination. The line of story interest lies between the point of the inception of hope, or ambition, to the apex of either its culmination or frustration.

While story interest merely measures the line of the reader's approbation, human interest probes the depth of all human experience.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

By human interest we mean a heart experience that is readily made universal thru sympathetic understanding.

The elements of human interest are identical with hope, and desire or despair, and their phases and stages of progression or retrogression. The ascending scale in the major key of human experience and endeavor, is alike the world over, in civilization or in savagery. First there is Life and, with almost its first breath comes Hope; to realize hope demands Struggle, and struggle brings Recognition that matures into Appreciation. Deeper emotions now rise: Trust, and the even more personal relationship of Sympathy pave the way for the crowning emotion of happiness, Love. The gamut of the descending scale, or that in the minor key, begins the same, with Life and Hope that leads to Struggle. Here the tide changes with the advent of Failure that, at the most, wins fellow-Pity. In this descending scale, human interest deepens, according to the stage at which a story arrives at the end. It may terminate with dull Despair; or re-ascent the heights to Sacrifice that leads to Renunciation, maybe to Death.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

The game is Life; the players are the human Emotions; the Prize is the human heart.

The effective transmission of the writer's appeal to the mind and heart of the reader depends upon their mutual recognition and interpretation of human brotherhood. We all have the capacity for love and hate; goodness and transgression; happiness and sorrow. We need only be shown examples of these emotional vicissitudes to recognize them, tho humanity is so perverse in its whims and vagaries, that we may be at loss to understand them. We have to bear in mind that human nature is fickle even at its best and that characters are subject to this defect and inconsistency. The reader demands, however, that there be well-defined reasons for inconsistencies.

For a man to be and to act with naturalness is a matter of personal equation. Our judgment of his actions should be tempered by a three-fold consideration: First, we may concede the universal heart to man, blessed with eternal hope and cursed with primeval desire; second, we must tolerate the individual heart of man, which we call temperament, that

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

makes or mars his life according to his moral stamina and will-power; third, we must consider well the heartlessness of environment which, after all, is the molder of character — environment that can goad man to any crime, educate and cultivate him for any niche in life, crush out ambition and kill hope, or inspire him to supernal deeds. The same human heart may succumb to almost the worst misfortune and yet rise again to attain the greatest achievement. We know this thru our heart instincts, and that is the secret of life's infinite variety, and fiction's external appeal.

(EXAMPLE 37.) "*The Exiles*," by Richard Harding Davis, furnishes an excellent instance of the working out of the above three-fold consideration. A young Judge, seeking a holiday and a criminal at the same time, sojourns in a colony of men and women who are lawless exiles from their respective fatherlands. Tho he is a man of powerful will and character in his judiciary, yet environment wafts him back to his primeval instincts and he too becomes one with the exiles in both sentiment and deed.

Thus we see that for man to be truthfully natural, he has but to be himself. To adhere

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

to any single design or inflexible law in portraying the fiction-made human being would mean literally to carve a wooden man and to reckon without the whimsical human heart. In order to humanize his characters, a writer must make them do human acts rather than to be merely human in appearance. Physical portrayal is the minor consideration; emotional delineation the major.

(EXAMPLE 38.) Never once does Stevenson describe the physical characteristics of Markheim, in the story bearing that title, yet here we have one of the most remarkable examples of character delineation in the field of short-story fiction.

Dickens was inclined to make his characters over-natural by having them the logical, unswerving portrayal of the type itself, rather than a typical expression of a given class according to the individual. In this respect, we may say that Dickens was one of the greatest melodramatists. His characters were not too human — which is an impossible condition — but were the personification of abstract virtues and vices. The only types that are absolute in life are those whose heart and mentality have been severed thru a fell blow of insanity.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

Whether it be a story of man, woman or child; of mountain, village or tree; of something personal or impersonal, animate or inanimate, it must be translated into the one tongue of universal inter-communication—human emotion. The inanimate and impersonal must be personified, or humanized; man must be individualized.

(EXAMPLE 39.) *Gorky has given the human attributes of a living, human organism with a personal heart and mind, to a mob, in his story "The Passion of a Crowd." Another recent story called "The Heart of the Oak," takes a tree for its hero. It begins with a bold plea for human qualities and sympathies: "Can gold usurp the heart, think you, and eventually wither a noble piece of God's handiwork beyond recognition? I am but an old oak, gnarled with age, more than half decayed, a melancholy figure of past vigor encumbering one of Earth's loveliest spots, yet I maintain that it is so."*

The aim of the writer should be to make his stories, and not his characters, typical. One great episode in the life of the character should be typical, and this forms the climax-situation of the story itself. This qualification alone can make it seem naturally real. Human characters are no more extraordinary

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

than human beings; it is extraordinary relations between characters that make sufficient spice of life for fiction material.

Strictly speaking, a story seldom results in a change of the personality of a character, for this would result in loss of recognition. Our climax-situation results, rather, in change of mind, of heart, of opinions, of belief and of viewpoint, leaving the personality of the man much the same as when we first made his acquaintance.

Fiction is never merely a study of a character; but the comprehending of another human being's motives and a participation in his emotional experience.

Drama consists in making little moments of life show their greatness, and the great moments their universality, in a poignant personal appeal to the reader, observer or listener.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DRAMATIC SPARK

CONTRASTS; TRAGEDY; MELODRAMA; SUSPENSE;
DRAMA AND LITERATURE.

THE vitality of all fiction is derived from its dramatic element.

For fiction to contain harmonious beauty and emotional appeal alone is not enough. There must be dramatic suspense. In the dramatic suspense are concealed the mainspring of surprise, the mechanism of the climax, and the dynamo of galvanic effects.

The dramatic element in a story is perceived by the reader only thru its effect. It begins and continues in the guise of cumulative insinuations from the very first word, and reaches its full stage of development in the

THE DRAMATIC SPARK

climax. It requires the constant and most skillful technical execution on the part of the writer, who must throw his whole soul into it without once showing his hand. The moment the writer's handiwork is detected and the reader gets a glimpse behind the scenes, his work becomes theatrical and ceases to be truly dramatic.

There has been much controversy as to whether or not drama can be classed as literature at all. Possibly the two are distinct artistic modes of expression. One must be careful, however, to distinguish between drama that may be read and drama that should be acted. Some forms of literature are not dependent on dramatic stimulus for artistic effectiveness. Yet how few of the acknowledged great Histories, Biographies, Essays and Letters are not artificially seasoned with dramatic flourishes and vivid climaxes?

(EXAMPLE 40.) In "*A Brief History of the United States*," Barnes makes scores of dramatic promises in words like this: "On this battle hinged the fate of the war!" Carlyle takes a dramatic flight occasionally and brightens his biography of Burns in so doing: "Nay, do not the elements of all human virtues, and all human vices—the pas-

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

sions at once of a *Borgia* and of a *Luther*, lie written, in stronger or fainter lines, in the consciousness of every individual bosom, that has practiced honest self-examination?" Lamb's "Essays of Elia" teem with dramatic references: "Whom next shall we summon from the dusty dead, in whom common qualities become uncommon? Can I forget thee, Henry Man, the wit, the polished man of letters . . . ?" Lowell, in letters from Spain, garnishes everyday events with dramatic flavor: "During the last few days of the Queen's illness, the aspect of the city had been strikingly impressive. It was, I think, sensibly less noisy than usual, as if it were all a chamber of death, in which the voice must be bated."

When we come to fictional Literature, however, we find the dramatic element one of its essential ingredients. One cannot even imagine a Short Story without its moments of suspense, or its sense of impending catastrophe that does or does not come to pass, or its rising interest preparatory to the great moment of the climax. There can be no Short Story in fact without either a climax, or a supreme moment, or a culminating situation.

(EXAMPLE 41.) *The dramatic way of ending stories is fiction's way. In "Markheim" Stevenson has employed a criminal episode which, if the climax had not been skillfully gauged by dramatic*

THE DRAMATIC SPARK

suspense, would have possessed little more than statistical interest. But Stevenson has built up his climax, step by step, consciously, yet without the discernment of the reader, until the climax has become something of galvanic fire.

The chief difference between dramatic effects and melodramatic effects lies in the former employing internal mechanism and the latter external machinery. The dramatic method should appear to be the natural, the inevitable one. Its effects are not startling, but stirring. They brood amidst the busy daylight of life and burst in the hush and stillness of the night watches. Like the quiet that precedes the storm, and prepares mortals for a scenic outburst of the elements, drama seeks the quiet corners of narration for its great moments. In other words, drama has an affinity for contrasts.

But contrasts should never be lurid, tho they must always be vivid. The deepest dramatic effects are gentle, not violent. The greater the appeal that is made to the senses, the less apt is the soul to be affected. Life and vitality are at their lowest ebb in the silent hours of the morning, when death and weak-

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

ness, the most dramatic forces in physical existence are hovering nearest. And, too, dramatic effects are produced just as readily by keying the action or dialogue lower, as by keying it higher.

(EXAMPLE 42.) In the story, "The Man That Never Was," there is a passage that may be called the most dramatic in the whole story: William Channing had been raving violently at the causes that had brought him low, when he paused in the soft voice that was new to his mother: "So, you see, I'm going to pay it back some day, if I can only keep going. There's a darn old pain here"—tapping his chest which brought on a fit of ominous coughing—"that kind o' gets me at times. But I'll get over it." And he smiled reassuringly. His mother was struck with silence; she was looking at him keenly and clutching his hand tightly, as though a relentless tide were already awash at his feet and she would save him.

When the writer has induced taut suspense, the perfect sequence for the tragic climax would be a momentary tranquillity, possibly the descent of darkness, then the, not unexpected, deed itself.

Tragedy does not mean—dramatically speaking—the end of life always, but rather, the end of hope, ambition, desire of love. The

THE DRAMATIC SPARK

elements of fate and inevitability heighten dramatic effects and form a basis for subsequent tragedy. As we ascend or descend the scale the quality of our climax, or great moment, will be affected accordingly: achievement ends in a grand finale; failure fades into a sobbing gasp of tragedy.

Tragedy usually results from the inability of the hero to overcome the obstacles in his path — they overcome him. Man must either overcome environment or it will overcome him.

That the reader or audience should always know, or have an inkling of, the truth of the ultimate outcome of a tale, is essential to dramatic effects. With the reader's knowledge there is contrasted the condition imagined and feared by the hero who is ignorant of forthcoming events, just as man is ignorant of what fortune or misfortune is apt to befall before the setting of another sun.

Drama, in brief, requires that something of emotional and dynamic consequence must happen in a manner that shall poignantly reveal the soul-and-body struggle of one man to his fellows in a culminating situation, or climax.

To acquaint the reader with the measure of love in a given scene or situation, a stethoscope is preferable to a microscope.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TEMPER OF LOVE

DETAILS AD NAUSEAM; ROMANCE AND LOVE;
ILLICIT LOVE; THE INCOMPARABLE THEME.

JUST as all the world is said to love a lover, so all readers love a love story.

Tho love is such a desirable qualification as subject or contributing matter for fiction, yet it is interesting to note that a large percentage of the world's greatest Short Stories do not depend on love at all.

(EXAMPLE 43.) Ten stories are selected from various collections at hand—five having a powerful love motive, and five without any love motive at all: Love stories: (1) *A New England Nun*; (2) *La Morte Amoreuse*; (3) *Mrs. Knollys*; (4) *La Grande Bretèche*; (5) *Without Benefit of Clergy*. Stories in which love is not considered: (1) *The Black Cat*; (2) *Markheim*; (3) *The Ambitious Guest*; (4) *The Man Who Was*; (5) *An*

THE TEMPER OF LOVE

Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge. The latter are much easier to find.

The novice usually chooses a love theme, or culmination, for his story because of its universal appeal, or because of his intimate knowledge or experience of a case in point, or because he tries to imitate one of the popular stories of his own or of another day. It takes both courage and skill to depart from the love motive. Experience sooner or later teaches that the love story is after all the most difficult kind to write.

There is a certain crudity about the stronger passions, such as hatred, criminality and combativeness that make them more simple to elucidate than the tenderer passion of love. Love laid on with a heavy hand or brush makes a caricature of it. Love's natal atmosphere is gentleness, tenderness and sweetness. It languishes under the brutal hand in fiction just as it does in life. That fiction only can be made natural and real which images life's largest and tenderest moments in normal and consistent human behavior and action.

There seems to be an almost universal misuse of the word Romance as a synonym for

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

Love. That youth may be affected with the feelings of Romance and Love at the same period, or that the romance peoples are apt to indulge more in the tender passion of love, or that love and romance dwell in the same kingdom of beautiful imaginings, does not make them interchangeable terms. Romance is an idealistic mood that may journey alone and abhors physical being; Love is an ecstatic emotion that cannot live alone, and craves material existence and contact.

Love has nearly as many phases of expression as fiction has. Excessive desire for any object, cause or person may be called love. Its range of activity may be anywhere from bestial desire to spiritual affection. The same conventions of decency and sexual relations that we recognize and observe in society must be practiced by the creatures of fiction. Again, we are permitted to mirror all phases of life and existence that will bear the familiar gaze and promiscuous discussion of all clean-minded people.

The question of morals in fiction is regulated by contemporaneous conventions. Boccaccio's most licentious story is but a reflection

THE TEMPER OF LOVE

of the conversational topic of the day in smart circles; de Maupassant's risqué love affairs mirror the broad parlance of the volatile French people. Now, in the beginning of the Twentieth Century, fiction and drama seem to be swinging to the broadest gauge once again. Plays like "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and "Damaged Goods" are attended by throngs, and the intimate illicit experience depicted in the book, "Three Weeks," outsells the best sellers. Under the more or less Puritanical guise of social house-cleaning, we find writers — some astute, others sincere — turning to that diversion of sexual passion known as White Slavery as a potential and profitable source of fiction. Sexual desire and love should remain a proscribed theme in fiction just as long as it continues to be a proscribed practice in society. Seldom do we find the subject treated with a sanctity that warrants its use at all. Using it as a motive in fiction practically compels the inartistic writer to employ it either salaciously or suggestively in order to attain his emotional and dramatic effects. Now and again, we find the sexual-love stories written ostensibly as propaganda.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

Having discussed sexual love, we enter upon a limitless field of noble affection that extends all the way from love of children (parenthood) to love of country (patriotism), with a myriad of stations between. Above terrestrial love is the spiritual love, or faith (religion), which is an inexhaustible realm in itself, because of the dramatic fervor of man's belief and the ecstatic beauty of his spiritual emotions. Because of the religious laxity of the age, we find this field almost neglected.

Again we turn to life for guidance and find man's love for woman the most popular love in the world, hence the most prevalent in fiction. A curious feature of the successful depiction of love is that the story practically ceases at the moment of love's realization. The tolerable conditions of love for the reader's participation, are either in anticipating or reminiscing in the hero's love affair. What lovers say and do after their mutual love is avowed, again takes life for its precedent—the writer leaves them alone as much as possible. The tender avowal itself usually forms the climax of a story. How much of it should be transcribed is a matter of delicate,

THE TEMPER OF LOVE

refined and skillful selection. It is a matter not too deep, but too personally sacred for utterance. Oftentimes the writer fails to remember that tho his head may be full of ready dialogue, yet the hero—to be humanly consistent—feels too deeply for voluble utterance. It is a well-earned aspersion that derides inartistic fiction by saying that “That is the way people make love in books!”

Love may be said to be an incomparable theme, not merely because of its pleasurable esthetic strain, and because it is the font of all human desire, but also for its great plot power in being so flexibly potential as to change at will any character to whom it is applied.

Fiction should be no less real than life itself; it is not a mental excursion, but a soul experience that enriches the mind, mellows the heart and gives life a deeper significance.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE POIGNANCY OF EFFECT

CLIMAX; VIVIDNESS; PLAUSIBILITY; ART FOR ART'S SAKE; TO WIN FAME; WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE.

WE return to one of our original premises: the vision is all-in-all. Vision shall be the writer's chief inspiration; Art shall be his infallible guide. The object of the story shall be to give an outward and visible expression to an inward and spiritual impression or struggle. That a reader shall be entertained, edified and deeply moved shall not be the leading motive and object, but follow as a normal and natural consequence. To please the reader, the editor or the advertising manager is incidental.

THE POIGNANCY OF EFFECT

To make the reader see, feel and appreciate the vision, just as he sees, feels and appreciates it himself, is not only the writer's duty to Art, but the logical fulfillment of his calling. Thus it may be seen that the writer — by making the spiritual struggle worthy of his steel, the vision a fit tenant for the soul, and his mode of expression consistent with the proportions of his impression — builds a structure that commands attention and makes a worthy bid for the hearty appreciation of the intelligent and art-loving reader. By respecting the laws of Art and practicing the rules of technique, the writer ennobles his craft and offers the reader good Literature. More than this, no writer can do; no reader can ask.

Art for Art's sake should mean nothing less than Art for the understanding, appreciation and participation of all who have eyes to see and hearts to feel. Fiction is but a section of man's life turned soul-side out, that grafts itself upon the raw emotions of every sympathetic reader. The writer owes a duty to Art only and nothing to his reader who, rather, becomes his debtor for the service rendered.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

Look at it as you will, then, the average intelligent and tolerant reader must be taken into consideration because the response made by the artist-writer's appeal is but the universal tribute to Fine Art wherever it may be found.

Just what are the elements that constitute the basis for the writer's appeal and the working out of applied Art, have been discussed in detail. In what measure the individual reader will be affected will depend largely on his powers of sympathy. The message should be so simple as to demand only a knowledge of reading and a familiarity with the terms of its interpretation, to understand it. True eloquence needs neither explanation nor elucidation to any man with a heart. The reader may finish his story and stop reading, but the story cannot stop living, consciously or subconsciously, as long as his emotions survive.

(EXAMPLE 44.) *There are appealing points of contact running all thru a story that set the human heart tingling in one way or another for a lifetime. A couple of sentences in "The Exiles" have that effect: "Last week he had old Mulley Wazzam buy him a slave girl in Fez, and bring her out to his house in the suburbs. It seems that the girl was in love with a soldier, and tried to run*

THE POIGNANCY OF EFFECT

away to join him, and this man met her quite by accident as she was making her way across the sand-hills." And again in "*The Man Who Would Be King*,"—"I am telling you as straight as I can, but my head isn't as good as it might be. They drove nails through it to make me hear better how Dravot died."

To win Fame, the writer must move the heart of the multitude and affect the emotions of a generation. Astute advertising may boost the sales of a piece of fiction into the millions, but it has not the power to furnish a single drop of oil for the eternal lamp of Fame. Best sellers, like best men, scarcely ever outlive their allotted three-score-and-ten years. Too much fiction is born to blush inane.

(EXAMPLE 45.) *Boccaccio, Chaucer, Irving, Hawthorne, Poe, Bret Harte and Stevenson have all stood the sterling test of time, Poe, for instance, having increased the number of his readers annually since his death. The whole Twentieth Century will be lighted by the towering genius of at least one great fiction writer—Rudyard Kipling.*

There are hundreds who hold a candle for a day on the threshold of Fame, but seldom more than a single torch-bearer is vouchsafed a generation. Fame is a favored gift of the propitious gods, but genius is without doubt

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

nine-tenths intelligent effort, plus a hungry heart, a luxuriant imagination and a sympathetic soul. If the technique of any artistic pursuit or endeavor is studied until it is mastered, the perfect effect will come without thought or effort in the normal practice and exercise of that particular art. There is many a genius who prefers rather to lounge and pose and dream among the pygmies of the Valley of Mediocrity, than to serve an honest apprenticeship by climbing the steep path of Knowledge to the heights of the Master.

The poignancy of effect is not measured by the mental capacity of the reader, but by the emotional depth and appeal of the writer. The great essential to any effect at all is the continued presence of plausibility. This demands that a story appear to be neither fact nor fiction, but a slice of life. It is not a case of fictionizing any co-existent facts, but rather of creating a new fact of life thru fiction.

If the reader can but be made to understand the characters' heart movements, their actions will go unquestioned.

Effect depends entirely upon the manner of ending the story. The ending must appear

THE POIGNANCY OF EFFECT

inevitable to the story. The end of the story is not the end of the life of the chief character, but the end of that particular episode that the story set out to fictionize. If the power of the writer's expression has not been strong enough to suggest to the reader the complete conclusion, then the writer has failed. The impression must be given that the particular incident with which the story has to do, has been successfully culminated and is closed forever with the ending of the story. The writer must have so prepared for the climax-denouement, that all but the chief character will have been taken care of, so that explanations will be unnecessary. What follows is left to the length and breadth of the individual imagination.

When all is said and done, artists are but torch-bearers of flaming truth, messengers of the eternal verities, and heralds of the millennium. The artist's life must be consecrated to a labor of love. His feet must be firmly planted on the earth that gave him flesh; his heart must be strained in sympathetic fellowship toward his fellow man; his eyes and his soul must be fixed on God, the Eternal.

The beginning of the story must contain some of the climax's vitality; the end of the story closes the incident that called it into being.

CHAPTER XIX

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

(NOTE: While the following story may have many glaring defects, yet there are points in its narration that readily lend themselves to illuminative illustration. It is a story to which the author lays no claim to originality in plot conception. The shorter portions of the story, that are referred to in the parenthesized notes, are in italics. Furthermore, this story was written and published more than a year before this book was conceived. It is suggested that the story be read thru once, ignoring the italicized notes, if full analytical value is to be gleaned from it.

SACRIFICE

By

HENRY ALBERT PHILLIPS.

PRINCE ACHILGAR had tasted all the delights of the Orient — *the Orient, the lap, the bosom, the mother of luxury.* The

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

sweetest spices and the costliest perfumes had begun to grow stale in his nostrils, the most luscious fruits sour in his mouth; the *rarest ointments chafed his skin*; and women — had he not the most envied *harem in all India*? Had he not the far-famed Ourvasi to beguile the ennui of domestic existence? There was a time when the splendor of Ourvasi the Glorious could make the dullness of a hundred other wives a tolerable necessity. But, alas! Even Ourvasi had begun to fade in his sated eyes. The core of life had indeed become hollow!

(This story was written with perhaps deliberate negligence, the writer having endeavored to attain true human interest and universal heart interest and to induce atmosphere by means of symbolic suggestion, without verifying geographical, historical or ethnological data.)

Prince Achilgar, the Hindu sybarite, had taken account only of the fleeting *delights of the flesh*. The infinite joys of the soul lay, an unopened book, before him. He was Prince Achilgar, the rich and the mighty. His word was law; all men bowed and stepped aside at his approach; no sacrifice for the sake of his pleasures was unknown to him.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

But the supreme joy vouchsafed to man the Prince knew not — sacrifice.

(*The hero's soul has been turned inside out; the keynote of the climax has already been sounded; the title has been firmly welded together with the beginning and the ending.*)

This was not to be wondered at, when it is known that Prince Achilgar was yet a *stranger to love*, the goddess of sacrifice.

(*Here the motivating theme is suggested. It may be noted that the voluptuous atmosphere of the East has been simulated even in the semi-archaic style and the constant employment of rich symbolism.*)

Ourvasi gave him pleasure. His eyes burned and his flesh quivered at the sight of her; her kisses half-intoxicated him. Such was his love for the courtesan, Ourvasi. But Ourvasi had had her day. The light of her power had gone out. To the blasé Prince, *Ourvasi, the once-beloved*, was dead!

(*The obstacle appears that furnishes the first dramatic spark.*)

Thru the veins of Ourvasi ran the fiery blood of a proud race. Her heart, once heated to the temperature of love, grew not cold; and when spurned, became a white-hot

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

core of jealousy that swayed her ardor toward cruel revenge.

Ourvasi knew her day had come—and gone. She waited, ready either to love and sacrifice—even her life—for her lord; or to hate and kill because of this same love.

(The reader is no longer in doubt, yet he knows nothing. Fiction facts have been made of eternal truths.)

Months passed, the Prince moving about like one in a torpor. Everything wearied him. His wonted pastimes were waved aside. Ourvasi, alone, for all she had once been was tolerated.

At length Ourvasi determined to make an almost superhuman effort to rouse her Prince and *win again his affection*. There was to be a gala day set thruout the Prince's domain. A miniature *Durbar* was to take place in the cool of the afternoon; twenty rajahs, with their households, decked in luxurious trappings, were to make up part of the pageant. All this did Ourvasi plan for the awakening of her Prince's love.

(The emotional interest is roused by an appeal that needs no explanation.)

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

Even the *Indian heat*, that sometimes swept in stifling gusts through the palace courts, that day abated. The Prince was awakened by sweet-sounding cymbals and bathed in perfumed waters by his favorite eunuchs, his body anointed with the oil of rare flowers; his morning repast was of morsels that melted in his mouth, *leaving sweet memories* with his palate. The food was served on the richly carved and jewelled gold service that had been given his father by a potentate of Persia. But this was only the prelude! Behind the silken curtains surrounding the throne-room court were the sweetest singers of the realm, who sang love songs of the Orient, selected by Ourvasi. *Strains of music, thrummed on silver strings, sifted thru from unsuspected places, until the very air was vibrant with haunting melodies. Slaves passed thru now and again swinging smoking censers that left sweet odors in their wake.*

(Here we have an entire paragraph breathing forth atmosphere. Care must be observed that the reader is not satiated, and to obviate this and still heighten the effect, a certain melodic movement must be maintained. Both the reader

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

(and the Prince must be molded to meet the effects that follow.)

Then came Ourvasi, robed in filmy silks that veiled her form, yet left all the *glowing flesh tints shining thru.* Like a diaphanous cloud of ravishing loveliness, she swept toward her Prince. Just in front of him — her bosom heaving with emotion, her eyes alight with love and promise, her lips a-tremble with expectation — she paused.

Prince Achilgar looked intently for many seconds, and then smiled.

With a glad cry she sprang toward him, showering him with kisses, smothering him with caresses.

But the smile had left him cold, and her kisses and caresses *fell like blossoms on frozen ground.*

(The universal heart should feel a poignant response to the appeal here. A little embellishment has smoothed off the rough edges of grating tragedy.)

At length, with a futile cry, Ourvasi stepped aside and clapped her hands sharply.

“Bring in the *dancer — the music — the sound of laughter* — or I die!” she sobbed, as two slaves appeared.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

(Antithesis has broken the strain before it reached that tautness that should only be produced by the climax itself. Ourvasi's sobs have sweetened her misery with pathos.)

"Oh, my lord," she whispered to the Prince, who sat looking languidly at her, "has thy heart grown fat from overfeeding, while mine lies starving at thy feet?"

"Thou art my wife. Is it not enough?" asked the Prince.

"So are many women, housed within thy palace to feed on each other's hearts and grow fat and ugly. I shall never become one of them. Never!"

"I care not," said the Prince, *calling for a cigaret.*

(The employment of figurative phraseology that is characteristically consistent has heightened the effect of a statement that would have been commonplace as a mere fact. The Prince has not once been described, but delineated.)

But Viamallah, the dancing girl of the Goddess of Siva, had entered and stood salaaming before the indifferent Prince. She was Ourvasi's last resort.

For a moment her graceful, slight form stood swaying to the opening swing of the

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

sensuous music of the Temple players. The music quickened, and her sinuous form responded in such harmony that she was moving about the room before one seemed aware that she had moved at all.

The dance had been designed to suit the occasion and was aptly called "The Awakening." The opening movement depicted Drowsiness throwing her filmy mantle over the head of the sleeper. The dancer's movements began to weave the air with such a somnolent motion that the onlooker grew strangely sleepy. Then the music ceased and the dancer, with closed eyes, swept silently about in an undulating manner, suggestive of a sleeper's heavy breathing. Suddenly a bell clanged with startling distinctness, and the wakening dance followed. The sleeping form expanded gracefully, like an opening flower, into all the beauties of life filled with the joy of living. As the dance proceeded, passion and fire crept into the movement, the effect of which was heightened by occasional recourse to the muscle dance.

(This entire paragraph has doubly painted the picture of Achilgar's soul. No tiresome intro-

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

(speciation has been resorted to. The reader's imagination has opened the gateway to his heart. The dance may have affected us in some measure as it has the Prince.)

The music had risen from a lullaby, been hushed to silence, then had burst forth again into a wild laughing lilt.

Prince Achilgar had unconsciously followed the spirit of the dance. Color had come to his cheek, fire into his eye, and a quick beating into his heart.

The Prince had awakened!

The performance had gradually risen to a climax. The dancer's movements grew so rapid and spirited that the eye could scarcely follow them. Without warning, she gave a sudden cry and flung herself into the arms of the Prince!

Before he could clasp her, as it seemed he would, she was away again. Pausing for an instant before him and lifting her veil, she ran timidly into a curtained alcove.

(A new element has insinuated itself in the story, bringing with it new life, strong hope and the intimation of a struggle. The players are the emotions of the reader as well as the characters and the prize is a human heart.)

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

Prince Achilgar rose and called, and slaves brought her again before him.

"Come, thou spirit of the air; the Prince himself will give thee a drink that he alone has tasted. Fill the golden cup, slaves, and depart!"

Prince Achilgar had truly awakened!

"Wouldst thou make a wife of the Goddess of Siva's dancing girl?" cried a harsh voice.

The Prince about to take the shrinking girl in his arms and press the cup to her lips, turned to find Ourvasi's gaze fastened on him, full of hate, her eyes strangely green, *like those of the jungle snake.*

"What is thy name, child?" asked the Prince, ignoring Ourvasi. An unctuous *sweetness* had crept into his voice, a winning *softness* into his eyes and a *gentleness* into his manner *that was strange to him.* Languor had departed.

(We feel that the Prince is battling hard to win our sympathy. The simile describing the light in Ourvasi's eyes warns us to beware of her. A feeling comes over us that the poor little dancing girl is going to be crushed between those two mill-stones of the world.)

"Viamallah," replied the girl simply, and

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

there was *in her eyes a wonder of new vision, as though she, too, had just awakened.*

"Go!" shrieked the infuriated Ourvasi.

The girl departed with the *slow steps of one having a full heart.* The Prince said no word, but his eyes had been the heart's tongue, and to these two the hot words of Ourvasi were only as a north wind that must soon abate. *The censure of the whole world would have been as nothing.*

(That the two are in love the reader does not doubt for an instant, yet the word love has not been mentioned. No excuse has been offered for any illicit phase of love, because it is understood that the customs of the East are not violated.)

To remain longer in the Prince's presence meant only that she must kill, so Ourvasi hurried away, her heart scorching from the pent-up fire within.

When she had gone, the Prince clapped his hands.

"Tell the danseuse of the Goddess of Siva to tarry in the garden. It is the will of the Prince. And you, Gunga Da, guard her well. Go!"

In the Garden of the Golden Goddess he

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

found her, trilling out some of the gladness in her heart to a pair of mating paroquets, that billed and cooed all the while, as though they well understood. She heard him approach, but did not turn until he placed a snow-white flower among the shining tresses of her hair, pressing it down with his lips.

(If this were essentially a love story before everything else the climax would be dangerously near at this moment. But being a tale of the psychology of a great sacrifice, the love motive becomes incidental.)

The gay-plumaged birds flew away and left them.

"Viamallah," he said softly, "Viamallah, my pretty flower!"

"My lord," she whispered, her poor little voice trembling with the throb of her heart.

"Nay, Viamallah, thy husband, from this day forth. I have said it!"

But Viamallah had begun to weep bitterly, and the Prince with a distress, the like of which he had never known, sheltered her tiny flower-crowned head on his breast.

(An action of this sort has an appeal that is likely to win the first portion of sympathy and compassion for the Prince from the reader.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

The reader submits himself yieldingly to the plea of the Prince.)

“No—no! I may not become thy—wife—”

“Viamallah!” In the word was *a world of gentle reproach.*

“The woman—thy wife—has said as much—”

“The woman—no longer my wife—lies! Viamallah, come now before the Golden Goddess. I shall betroth thee. Then a few matters, more or less, arranged, and thou becomest, Viamallah, my princess, *my wife!*”

There before the Golden Goddess, did they become betrothed. *Thus Prince Achilgar found the greater happiness.*

(Thus have we arrived at the fiction-made fact. Telling it in terms of informative matter it would have occupied a few words. Narrating it in terms of the heart, that should make a soul-experience of it, it has traveled a longer road paved with variegated thought and fancy.)

But an evil spirit lingered in the garden, that was destined to add *bitter dregs to their cup of happiness* before it should be full to the brim.

Ourvasi, suspicious of just such a proced-

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

ure on the part of the Prince, had followed him. From a sheltered spot she had witnessed the compact that, according to Eastern customs, made Viamallah, the simple dancing girl, her successor.

Before the two engrossed lovers departed, Ourvasi had stolen away to her private quarters, on the canopied roof of the palace. She quickly summoned Gooluk, her devoted slave.

"Goolok, thy mistress is about to be thrust among the *sour-sweets*, where thou wilt no longer be permitted to serve her and *grow rich*. Thou canst save her, mayhap. This *dancing toy*—thou sawest her to-day—will soon leave the palace for the Temple of the Goddess of Siva. Gather together some of the *worst knaves thou knowest, and bring this upstart to the cave of Rhannakikh, the old sorcerer*. Quick! Thou hast but little time. Fly!"

(We arrive at a decided point in the rising suspense, preparatory to the approach of the great moment of the climax. The reader is prepared now for anything.)

All the festivities at the Prince Achilgar's palace had been forgotten. The Prince, in

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

his new-found love, had no more need of them or their memory. Ourvasi saw this and became doubly bent on her quest of hate and *his downfall*.

Less than an hour after Viamallah had entered the palace, *a simple child seeking only the moment's pleasure of her ailing sovereign lord*, she was carried, *a helpless princess-to-be*, into the cave of the vilest sorcerer in all India.

(Pathos vies with dramatic suspense in affecting the emotions. Contrast has made the dramatic effect gentle. Every statement concerning Viamallah has become tinged with emotional concern that must bear resemblance to the interest of any sympathetic reader.)

Ourvasi met the terror-stricken child with bitter taunts.

"So, little cat, with such pretty movements, they bring thee with thy claws bound so they cannot scratch the heart of the woman who would have helped thee! But I have a way that will remove thy claws out of my heart and *make thee ugly*, so ugly that thy lover — oh, I know his ways! — will scorn thy presence and throw thee *from the palace to the dogs that scavenge the city*, for the loathsome

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

creature thou shalt be. Pretty, pretty, pretty — ugh! I hate thee — heart-stabber!"

(While the language used by Ourvasi is suggestive, it does not tend to lessen our opinion of Viamallah, but rather to intensify it. The bond of sympathy associates each incident with the reader's personal concern.)

Having delivered this terrible threat, Ourvasi turned her attention with glowering eagerness, to the operations of the old sorcerer. *Viamallah cowered like a rabbit under the surveillance of the three ugly creatures who had dragged her to this evil den.*

Having mixed the powders and potions of his concoction in an earthen basin, the old priest built a fire of fagots before a battered idol of the God of the Underworld, and there he and Ourvasi stooped low over the brewing pot, *altho the vile odor it emitted sickened even the callous villains in charge of Viamallah, while she shrank farther and farther back, as tho she would lose her senses from fright.*

(The insignificance of the girl's efforts and tiny person in the face of the enforced environment introduces the tragic note. Suggestion is rife in almost every line. Thus thru indi-

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

(rect allusion the reader has the greater privilege of drawing his own conclusions.)

At length a *green vapor* rose from the pot, and the sorcerer sprang up with a few muttered words. Ourvasi rose too, a *malignant glee* in her eyes. Viamallah gave a little moan of horror as the three ruffians, at a signal from the priest, took a firm grip on her body and raised her in the air. The priest, with wonderfully rapid movements, was making a sort of poultice of the steaming green mass, *taking particular care that none of it touched his flesh.*

"Now!" he muttered to the waiting men.

(No direct reference is made to the exact object and possible effect of the poultice, or to the nature of the punishment in store for Viamallah, yet thru continued suggestion the reader's imagination speculates until his emotions are wrought with suspense.)

The child gave a tiny shriek and then subsided into a convulsion of hysterics, *laughing horribly*. The priest approached, *carefully holding the bandage in front of him, the others all drawing back*. In her agony the girl threw back her head, *exposing her pretty features,*

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

her large, *pain-stricken eyes* and her soft, pretty neck. With a dexterous movement, the sorcerer pressed the bandage tight against the pretty vision!

The child shuddered, uttered a little moan and then became *mercifully unconscious*. The men had *dropped their burden with a cry of revulsion*, as the smell of corroding flesh reached their nostrils.

(*Not once, even now are the specific details of the mutilation given. There is the greatest danger in a scene of this kind of producing disgust instead of inducing horror. The more artistic way is to describe the physical deed thru emotional reaction. The idea is not to make the reader see the deed, but to feel its effect.*)

They brought their fragile burden of disfigured flesh and laid it on one corner of the silken draperies of the throne, before which, as the sylph-like danseuse with beautiful face and eyes like living pools of lapis lazuli, she had won the heart of a prince. Over her face still lay the same gauzy veil that had so tantalizingly hid it from the Prince's enchanted gaze. But over the veil, now and forever, lay an impalpable blanket of darkness. She who

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

had never known an unhappy moment, now held, wretchedly imprisoned in her young heart, the woes of a life's experience. She lay there, numbed with the physical pain and mental torture of it all, when thru her dim perceptions came the realization that someone had entered the room. She repressed the soft moanings that passed her lips with every respiration, and waited.

(This entire paragraph is replete with symbols of the wretched little dancer's spiritual struggle. The pathos it will be noted is attained thru contrasting the remnants of one's broken hope with the unfeeling objects of one's unfulfilled desire. The essence of all pathos lies in the irrevocable fact, that despite our shattered heart and dreams the world goes blithely on, amid sunshine, laughter and eternal hope. The world will never die of a broken heart—thank heaven!—though men do.)

It was the Prince, *his swathy countenance wreathed in smiles* as he communed with himself. His eyes were *lighted with lanterns of love* as he gazed out on the city toward the *Temple of Siva*. His sweet reveries were disturbed by the sudden appearance of one of Ourvasi's slaves bearing a letter.

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

Without a word the Prince took it, smiling at the sight of his wife's handwriting. He read it thru aloud once, its significance being too remote from his imminent thoughts to realize at a glance.

"You despise my love and you love instead the dancing girl—whom I have returned to you with all my esteem.

OURVASI."

A tiny moan reached his ear. He turned and saw *the crumpled bundle, draped with tarnished silk*. A sob broke from his twitching lips.

(*The Prince is depicted enjoying, in anticipation, all the sweet glories of a pure love before the cruel blow of reality gently bursts upon him. The reader appreciates this momentary respite and lull in the culminating situation. There would have been something almost unholy in the Prince's walking straight to the girl and throwing the veil aside, that the considerate reader could not easily forgive.*)

"Viamallah — Viamallah!" he cried, hoarsely. In this horror he stood spellbound.

"My — lord — come not near me!" pleadingly whispered a little voice, grown more sweet in its depth of pathos.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

"Viamallah — Viamallah!" The Prince was moving nearer, groping, tottering.

"Stay! Oh, my lord — listen — I implore thee! Thou must not *see!* I am but a thing — now! They have disfigured me!" *A rift of anguish* had broken thru the childlike tones now. "They have — blotted out my eyes!" The rest was *shattered by sobs*: "Thou lovedst — a beautiful danseuse — me thou couldst not — love — disfigured as I am —"

(There now comes that moment of uncertainty near the great moment itself that marks the highest point in the suspense. The reader has an inkling of the outcome, which the writer alone knows precisely.)

"Poor little flower — my poor little flower! Fear not, for I shall never look on thy face again, my Viamallah, never again, for —"

"My lord!" she cried, her tone suddenly tautened with apprehension.

"Nay, thou shalt be well taken care of — my Viamallah." He clapped his hands.

"Carry the Princess — gently, *as thou wouldst a new-born babe* — to my lady Ourvasi's former chamber. Then, quick! The best doctors in the city — in all India!"

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

(In the psychology of emotion in these two, all pathos has disappeared in the evident joy that shines thru misfortunes. The danger lies in over-doing the re-action that followed. It has taken restraint to produce effective simplicity. This is the greatest moment thus far in the lives of these two characters, and in order to make it shine forth with its true brilliancy, tranquillity is induced so that nothing will detract from it.)

“My lord,”—the voice was bathed in tears—“wilt let me touch thy hand but once—just once?” And when they had brought her near and the fingers lay tenderly on his palm, he seized the hand, a sob bursting uncontrollably from his tightly-pressed lips, that drowned the tiny murmur beneath the veil.

(No word has been said directly telling the feelings of the lovers. It has all been conveyed thru terms of the reader's sympathetic understanding. Thru the medium of the emotions it is brought within the range of experimental experience. We interpret the depth of their feeling by a recognition of our own emotional capacities.)

“I love thee, my lord Achilgar—I love thee! I go—*happy*—my lord!”

The bearers heard the sweetened words and

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

left the room with *trembling lips and eyes bedewed.*

The Prince was left alone — a broken man.

(*Though we here have the last words uttered in the story by Viamallah, they fill us with a complete sense of gratification. Any reader with a heart and an imagination readily fathoms the tenure of her happiness for the rest of her days. Yet the true sublimity of her sentiment is enforced thru their reaction on the bearers who carried her out.*)

When the heavy curtains had closed and all was silence, he took the golden-hilted dagger from its sheath. Absently fingering the sharp edge, he paused a moment on the brink of eternity. Then raising the blade aloft, he poised it above his neck, where the artery stood out like a whipcord, as tho bidding destruction.

(*There is perfect harmony of tragic suggestion, tho not a word as to his mental resolution. Occasional brief delays here, if not too frequent, and seemingly natural, are bound to heighten the inevitable climax.*)

“ Farewell, Viamallah, my little crushed flower — farewell ! ”

Then an overwhelming fear seized the

A STUDY IN ANALYSIS

Prince, loosed his joints, brought his hand quivering to his side, and brought his body half-sinking to the floor.

Cursing his cowardice, he rose to his knees, seized the dagger firmly and set his teeth. He raised the weapon slowly, gathering energy on the way. He paused. Suddenly his whole frame had become animated by a wonderful thought that sprang into his face, illuminating it with the wild gaze of a zealot.

(The climax has been retarded, thru the offer of a new promise that must of necessity be of even greater moment than what had before seemed imminent.)

"Viamallah, I shall not leave thee! We shall be one in all things, for mine eyes shall see nothing but the remembrance of thy beauty, and our sympathy shall be mutual and eternal!"

(The climax is at hand. We know that the Prince is about to wipe away every stain that has remained against him. The eyes of his soul have seen more clearly than his eyes which he now looks thru for the last time. There is nothing to distract our fixed gaze from the final spectacle.)

Two quick and decisive strokes did it.

ART IN SHORT STORY NARRATION

The sharp dagger-point pierced each eyeball, and he sank to the floor for a moment in groveling agony. Then he began to *creep, creep, creep*,—it seemed for eternity—groping his way toward the curtain, his blood-stained, sightless eyes a memento of love's terrible sacrifice.

(While this is tragic, we can scarcely call it a true tragedy, for our hero has overcome every obstacle laid in his way. He encompassed his chief desire in life thru winning the woman he loves in the way she would most desire.)

But into the face of Prince Achilgar had come peace. Behind the physical pain was the vision of the supreme joy vouchsafed to man—which he at last knew better than most men—*sacrifice!*

(Here is the great moment and climax. We find our title, beginning and end woven together in a full note of harmony. The incident that called the story into being is closed forever. We were interested in the vital details that surrounded Prince Achilgar's sacrifice.)

As he disappeared behind the heavy curtain, his cry rang ghostlike thru the great hall: “Viamallah, I come—wait, Viamallah!”



83

This book should be returned to
the Library on or before the last date
stamped below.

A fine is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

NOV 13 1968 ILL
2130 687

73-83259
NOV 2 1973
FIRESTED

6-2
F.30X D.11112
7-1978
AMPLIFIED

Lit 966.16

Art in short story narration ...
Widener Library 006311265



3 2044 079 639 332